



July 20, 2020

Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor, State of California
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Newsom:

On behalf of the CA Latino Legislative Caucus, we write to you regarding the disastrous impact that the COVID-19 pandemic is having on the Latino community, particularly those working in factories, fields and offices, dedicated to maintaining the supply chain for goods and services that our residents need.

As you know, our caucus has been tracking the disparate impact the pandemic is having on the health of Latinos in our state. Regrettably, the situation has only gotten worse since our members had a discussion with Secretary Mark Ghaly on May 22. While we look forward to our meeting with you on August 3, given the gravity and urgency of the situation we feel compelled to share some recommendations and insights now in order to accelerate the review process.

Over 140,066 Latinos in our state have tested positive for COVID-19. This accounts for 56% of all cases, by far the highest number among all demographics and grossly disproportionate to the Latino population in the state. The death total within the Latino community is also alarmingly high – 45% of all demographics for a total of 3,373 deaths. The increase in these numbers coincides with the gradual reopening of our economy and suggests our front line and essential workers still do not have sufficient testing, protective materials and workplace protections. From slaughterhouses in the Central Valley to garment factories in Los Angeles and farming operations across the state, reports of huge infection clusters are increasingly common. These workers then bring home the infection to their loved ones and others in the community. To address this growing calamity, we recommend the following:

1. Executive Order – Issue an Executive Order that requires businesses to report workplace exposures/infections to all their employees (and independent contractors) as well as to state authorities. Businesses should also be compelled to provide workers with guidance on all resources available to them, including sick leave, as well as spell out steps taken to keep their facilities safe and make available protective materials. Though these common sense items are contained in pending legislation (AB 685 by Assemblywoman Eloise Gomez Reyes) we feel the situation demands that they be implemented immediately through an Executive Order.

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2. Oversight Investigations – Initiate oversight proceedings on billions of dollars that have been delivered to local governments for pandemic relief. While most of the funding is clearly being used to meet the most pressing needs of our residents, there are reports that certain localities have not or do not plan to utilize relief funds for their intended purpose. For instance, in Fresno County (which accounts for 10,639 infections – the 6th largest county total in the state) funds are not being allocated to disproportionately hard hit communities – incidentally, those with the highest concentrations of Latino residents. Vigilant oversight is critical to ensure that all appropriated funds are properly spent on those in need, that no specific demographic of residents is denied funding, and that there be transparency on all public expenditures.

Thank you for your consideration of this letter. Please do not hesitate to call us, or our caucus staff, at (916) 651-1535 should you have any questions or need additional information.

Sincerely,



LORENA GONZALEZ
Chair, CA Latino Legislative Caucus
Assemblywoman, 80th District



MARIA ELENA DURAZO
Vice Chair, CA Latino Legislative Caucus
Senator, 24th District

cc: Attorney General Xavier Becerra
Labor & Workforce Development Agency Secretary Julie Su
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