



GRETCHEN WHITMER
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY
LANSING

JEFF DONOFRIO
DIRECTOR

The Honorable Gretchen Whitmer
Office of the Governor
Romney Building
Lansing, Michigan 48909

Dear Governor Whitmer:

In accordance with Public Act 146 of 2010 (originally P.A. 164 of 1975), wherein it is stated that the Hispanic/Latino Commission of Michigan (HLCOM) shall submit a full written report of its activities and recommendations each year to the governor and Legislature, we are pleased to submit to you the 2019 Annual Report for HLCOM.

HLCOM worked to accomplish its statutory goals, and in doing so, helped improve the quality of life for Hispanic/Latinos across Michigan. Over the past 12 months, Executive Director Felipe Lopez Sustaita and staff drove over 9,000 miles across the state visiting communities and engaging in dialog about the needs that exist within each community. These needs include but are not limited to access to migrant farmworker students summer school education for K12 and non-traditional populations, employment opportunities, driver licenses for all, equitable pay, access to higher education, and public services.

HLCOM Commissioners and staff have established significant relationships with community leaders, community members, farm owners, farm workers, state employees, non-profit organizations, businesses, health organizations, law enforcement, K-12 institutions, colleges and universities, local, state, and federal government organizations and other institutions.

HLCOM has been working toward becoming the focal clearinghouse for information on the Hispanic/Latino community in the State of Michigan, as no other organization in the state has the capacity or resources to undertake such a task. Our small staff of two creatively explores ways to partner with various organizations and community resources, for a better understanding of our constituents needs. We have managed to make significant progress but can benefit from additional resources to elevate the quality of work.

Our team is pleased to provide evidence of another impressive return on taxpayer investment with respect to the funds you recommended and appropriated by the Michigan Legislature. HLCOM expenses for 2019 include staff salaries, sponsored/directly organized events, and operational expenses. Our commission is an indispensable link between government and our growing community, and we are committed to develop and implement policies addressing the needs of Hispanic/Latinos in Michigan. Our total operating budget for 2018-2019 was \$286,000, from that

total we spent \$225,018 on salaries, \$51,392 on operational cost, and \$11,890 on contractual. As you can see from our budget we are limited, yet we were still able to end the year with a lot of success.

Over 1,500 individuals benefited from attending our HLCOM events this year. HLCOM commissioner and staff also attended several events throughout the state. Executive Director Lopez Sustaita served as the keynote speaker in multiple events throughout the state. We expect this number to continue to grow in subsequent years; especially because our events continue to grow, and we continue to be invited to be present at events. We are fortunate to share that we have over 50 public and private partners who allowed us to organize and lead, trainings, celebrations, and disseminate pertinent information to the Hispanic/Latino community in Michigan.

Furthermore, here are some of our 2019 highlights:

2019 Highlights

- HLCOM hosted its 3rd Annual Statewide Hispanic/Latino College Graduation in April 5, 2019 in Lansing Community College. We had over 500 people in attendance, and had 120 graduates who attended the event. Students and faculty from 19 colleges and universities across the state participated. We have already begun to plan for the 4th Annual Statewide Hispanic/Latino College Graduation. This event was sponsored by our partners Comcast.
- HLCOM staff drove over 9,000 miles in 2019. The visits included community gatherings/commission meetings, constituent meeting, migrant farm worker visits, events, college and university visits with leadership/students, censes 2020 meetings, and other relevant meetings with our partners.
- HLCOM partnered with several organization and the Michigan Legislative Latino Caucus to develop Hispanic/Latino-centric initiatives.
- HLCOM partnered with the Michigan Latino Legislative Caucus, and other community organizations with planning and organizing of the first Michigan Latino Legislative Day. The event served as a way for our community members to connect with their legislators, learn more about statewide leaders, and connect with other Latino organizations around the state. The Michigan Latino Legislative day turned out to be a success.
- The Annual Hispanic/Latino Heritage Celebration Event was held on Thursday, October 10, 2019 in Grand Rapids at the Goei Center. We had the privilege of having Attorney General Nessel and you Governor Whitmer as our guest speakers. From my understating we have never had the honor of having a Governor attend our event. We are thankful for your willingness to participate this year and hope that you will consider attending again next year. Overall, the event was highly successful, with community members from across the state in attendance. At the event, we recognized the top 25 LatinX of Michigan, awarded six community awards, and 9 scholarships to college students from across the State of Michigan.
- HLCOM Executive Committee and Executive Director Lopez Sustaita have started meeting the several of your staff Governor Whitmer. We have never had this kind of access to your staff, we would like to commend you for your relentless support. Our staff feels a sense of hope to be able to meet with your staff quarterly and we look forward to being at the table where decisions are made.

- HLCOM printed and distributed newsletters which keeps legislators, local officials, our community, and others informed and offers transparency. It will be provided one time a year both in print and digital format through our website. The HLCOM website has been a great way to disseminate information keeping our community informed is our priority.
- Executive Director Lopez Sustaita was appointed to the 2020 Censes Complete Count Committee. HLCOM is planning on being involved to support this effort that is critical to our community and all the state of Michigan.

2019 Recommendations

- With the significant growth of the Hispanic-Latino population in Michigan, we believe that we should be considered for a budget increase for 2019-2020. Currently, we operate with a \$286,000 budget. We have limited staff and resources; therefore, it is challenging to provide support to the Hispanic/Latino community.
- Our current team is made up of the executive director and a part-time contractor. A more substantial budget would allow us to expand our team, develop new opportunities to support Hispanic/Latino events throughout the State, and provide a more comprehensive array of higher-quality services for our Hispanic-Latino constituents.
- Our staff is working on a proposal with specific details on how the additional funds can further our mission.

On behalf of the Commission and staff, we sincerely appreciate your commitment to improving the quality of life for Michigan's Hispanic/Latino community and making Michigan a welcoming state for our community.

We also want to recognize and thank the many state agencies, various-organizations throughout the state and your executive staff's assistance in furthering the mission of the Hispanic/Latino Commission of Michigan.

Sincerely,



Sonya Hernandez
Chairperson



Felipe Lopez Sustaita, Ed. D.
Executive Director

Cc: Executive Director Fayrouz Saad
HLCOM Commissioners

Attachments:
HLCOM 2019 Accomplishments Report