



RICK SNYDER
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF LICENSING AND REGULATORY AFFAIRS
HISPANIC LATINO COMMISSION OF MICHIGAN

SHELLY EDGERTON
DIRECTOR

January 9, 2017

The Honorable Rick Snyder
Office of the Governor
Romney Building
Lansing, Michigan 48909

Dear Governor Snyder:

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 2016 Annual Report of the HLCOM for the calendar year of January 1, 2016 to December 31, 2016.

The HLCOM worked to accomplish our statutory goals, and in doing so, helped improve the quality of life for Latinos across Michigan. It is important to note that the HLCOM was without an Executive Director from January 1, 2016 to July 18, 2016. During this time, Commissioners were active in fulfilling the necessary duties under the leadership of the HLCOM Chair, Mr. Noel Garcia Jr.

My name is Felipe Lopez Sustaita, and I am an immigrant from San Luis Potosi, Mexico. I was hired in late June and started my new role as Executive Director of the HLCOM on July 18, 2016. My family and I came to the United States in search of a better life. My parents and siblings entered the migrant farmworker stream when we arrived in this country. We traveled every year from Texas to Tennessee, Georgia, and Michigan. I still have family that comes to Michigan every year to work in the migrant stream.

My educational background includes: A Bachelor's of Arts in Criminal Justice, a Masters of Social Work from Michigan State University, and a Doctorate in Education from Ferris State University. Prior to becoming the Executive Director of the HLCOM, I worked at Lansing Community College for eight years.

During the past six months as the Executive Director of the HLCOM, I have driven 7,000 miles across the state of Michigan. I have visited various communities, talked to many people, and had an opportunity to listen to their stories. I have visited churches, businesses, high schools,

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colleges and universities, community centers, community foundations, farms, and several other places. As the new Executive Director, I wanted to hear from the Latino community before formulating a strategic plan. I was seeking feedback and guidance from our constituents. My intent has been to be well informed in order to move forward more efficiently. I also had the privilege to attend 2 national conferences, one in California and the other in Florida, to continue to expand the working relationship of HLCOM with our peers in other states.

With this in mind, here are some of the highlights of 2016. The HLCOM launched a Back to School Backpack Program in August of 2016 that benefited the following three cities: Lansing, Saginaw, and Flint. We successfully distributed over 450 backpacks with supplies to children in those cities and were able to donate additional supplies and backpacks to the State Migrant Head Start Program. Our Commission knows that it is important for children to be prepared on their first day of school. Therefore, we have already begun planning for 2017 with a focus on growing our initiative.

Additionally, for the third consecutive year, the HLCOM has entered an Interdepartmental Agreement with the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services for the provision of Mental Health Program and Services for the Hispanic Latino Special Populations (see attached report). This year we awarded three grants to the following organizations: a \$140,000.00 grant to the Community Health and Social Services Center (CHASS) of Detroit; a \$40,000.00 grant to Centro Multicultural La Familia (CMLF) of Pontiac; and, a \$20,000.00 grant to Cristo Rey Community Center (CRCC) of Lansing.

I had the privilege of visiting all three centers and was able to talk to some of the clients during my visits. I was impressed with the quality of services. Each of the centers provide high quality bilingual services that range from domestic violence and mental health counseling to programing for the empowerment of Latino individuals. Other programs offered are prevention and treatment programs that address substance use, disorders, assessment, diagnosis, treatment planning, drug screening, group and individual therapy, and women's specialty programs.

Another highlight of 2016 was our Annual Hispanic Heritage Celebration Event where we celebrated the accomplishments and contributions of Latinos in Michigan. The event was held on October 7, 2016 at the MSU Kellogg Center in East Lansing. The event was highly successful with community members from across the state in attendance. We awarded 6 scholarships to college students from a highly competitive pool of 88 applicants. The 6 winners represented: Hope College, Grand Rapids Community College, Grand Valley State University, Michigan State University, Western Michigan University, and Siena Heights University. Our keynote speaker for the evening was Dr. Jorge Gonzalez, President of Kalamazoo College.

In November of 2016, we also launched our first newsletter for the HLCOM (see attachment). In an effort to be transparent with our constituents, we will continue to provide our community with a newsletter every three months.

In terms of recommendations, I am working on a report to assess the ongoing demographic shifts of the Latino community in Michigan. With the significant growth of the Latino population in Michigan, I believe that consideration should be given to a budget increase for the work of

HLCOM. It is very difficult to provide support to our contemporary Latino community with a limited staff and funding allocation that has not been substantively modified in several decades and was established to serve a smaller statewide Latino population. Our current staff is made up of 1.5 FTE's with a full-time Executive Director position and a part-time (20 hour) graduate student. A modified budget would allow us to expand our staff, and provide a wider array of higher-quality services for our Latino constituents.

I would also recommend that we be given the opportunity to have a stand-alone HLCOM website or be given priority consideration for website redesign within LARA in 2017. Our current website is not user friendly for the constituents we attempt to serve and lacks bilingual content and functionality. Community members have expressed concerns with website navigation issues in my travels across the state. An improved website would allow us to make all our content material available in Spanish and English and improve our ability reach all Latinos seeking information and services from the State of Michigan. There are other recommendations that are beginning to surface regarding program and policy impact issues for the Latino community that we look forward to discussing with you in 2017, however these are the two operational issues that require immediate consideration at this time.

Once again, on behalf of the Commission and staff, we want to express our appreciation for your commitment to improving the quality of life of Michigan's growing Latino community and your continued efforts to make Michigan a welcoming state for all immigrants.

Finally, we want to recognize and thank the many state agencies, statewide stakeholder organizations and your Executive Staff's assistance in furthering the mission of the Hispanic Latino Commission of Michigan.

Sincerely,



Noel Garcia Jr.
Chairman



Felipe Lopez Sustaita
Executive Director

Cc: Director Shelly Edgerton, LARA
Bing Goei, HLCOM Ex-Officio, MONA
HLCOM Commissioners

Attachments:

MDHHS Mental Health Program and Services for Special Populations (FY 2016 Annual Report)
HLCOM Newsletter (November 2016)