



GRETCHEN WHITMER  
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN  
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY  
LANSING

SUSAN CORBIN  
ACTING DIRECTOR

**Hispanic/Latino Commission of Michigan, Commission Meeting  
Central Michigan University  
2900 West Rd. East Lansing, MI 48823  
November 19, 2021, 6:00PM-8:00PM  
Meeting Minutes No. 338**

**Commissioners Present**

|                              |                       |  |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|--|
| Sonya Hernandez, Vice Chair  | Floren시오 Hernandez    |  |
| Juanita Bocanegra, Secretary | Jesse M Bernal        |  |
| Esperanza Cantu, Treasurer   | Abril Valdes Siewert  |  |
| Jeremiah Hernandez           | Consuela Barber-Lopez |  |

**Staff Present:**

Isabel Montemayor-Vazquez (Executive Director)  
Francisca Garcia (Administrative Assistant)

**Guests:**

Poppy Hernandez (Executive Director, Office of Global Michigan)

**Start Audio Recording: 6:06 PM**

**1) Call to Order:**

Vice Chair Sonya Hernandez calls the meeting to order at 6:06 PM.

**Introduction:** Vice Chair Hernandez calls the meeting to order. Welcome from CMU host Alejandra Rengifo and self-introductions of Executive Director and Commissioners.

**2) Roll Call:**

Vice Chair Sonya Hernandez, Secretary Juanita Bocanegra, Treasurer Esperanza Cantu, Commissioners Jeremiah Hernandez, Floren시오 Hernandez, Jesse Bernal, Abril Valdes Siewert and Consuela Barber-Lopez were present.

**3) Acknowledgement of Commissioner Absences:**

Chair Monica Reyes, Commissioners Jose Sanchez, Jessica Cruz, Jesus Hernandez, Celeste Sanchez Lloyd and Anthony Rubio were not present.

**4) Approval of Agenda:**

Reading of the agenda.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Bocanegra moved to approve the meeting agenda, with support from Commissioner Jeremiah Hernandez. The motion was passed.

**5) Approval of Minutes from October 15, 2021:**

Minutes from the October 15 meeting were approved with prior review from Commissioners.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Bocanegra moved to approve meeting minutes, with support from Commissioner Bernal. The motion was passed.

**6) Executive Report:**

Monica B. Reyes, Chair  
Sonya Hernandez, Vice Chair  
Juanita Bocanegra, Secretary  
Esperanza Cantu, Trustee  
Anthony Rubio

Jessica Cruz  
Jeremiah Hernandez  
Floren시오 Hernandez  
Jesse M Bernal  
Consuela Barber-Lopez

Abril Valdes-Siewert  
Jesus M Hernandez  
Jose Sanchez, III  
Celeste Sanchez Lloyd

**a) Vice Chair Sonya Hernandez**

- a) No Chair report.
- b) Vice Chair announced elections will take place during the New Business section of the agenda. Chair Monica Reyes is not seeking reelection.
- c) Due to miscommunication or misinformation from the Governor's office, Juan Marinez is no longer a commissioner.
- d) New Executive Committee slate proposed: Chair, Jesse Bernal, Vice Chair, Sonya Hernandez, Secretary, Juanita Bocanegra, Treasurer, Floren시오 Hernandez.

**7) Executive Director Report:**

**a) Dr. Isabel Montemayor-Vazquez**

- a. E.D. has been working with the ICHD Redi Grant which documents issues regarding health disparities with minority and marginalized populations in Ingham County. Currently they are working on getting a lot of feedback regarding the current survey. There has been a turnover in personnel withing the ICHD working on this grant five times in the last year. This has created challenges and delays in making progress with the survey. Hopefully a survey will be ready to disseminate to the community soon.
- b. The commission is still working with LLEAD on a couple of partnerships. Al Flores, Diana Rivera and the E.D. are working on getting a student intern or consultant to work with both LLEAD and HLCOM to look at the 2020 census data and create an interactive map. The map would be posted on both the LLEAD and HLCOM websites to be accessed by the public. Administrative Assistant, Francisca Garcia is assisting LLEAD with a statewide directory, which will also be posted on the website of both organizations. The directory will list all organizations across the state that serve Hispanic/Latinx populations.
- c. As the Vice Chair Sonya Hernandez mentioned, we are in a transition process currently. We are working on putting together strategic planning for the future. We are working on the first steps of that right now with the Office of Global Michigan. We are working on better understanding functional operations within the commission along with the other ethnic commissions and how we can be better integrated and work together.
- d. The E.D. requested that each of the subcommittees work together to submit their end-of-the-year reports as soon as possible so that E.D. can submit with the Annual Report to the Governor's office.
- e. E.D. has been able to meet with most of the Commissioners one-on-one to get a better understanding of what their expectations are of her in her role with the commission. It has been nice getting to know each person.
- f. E.D. has attended the Statewide Latinx working group on COVID-19 for the state of Michigan. The group is currently working on their final report for the Governor's office which should be submitted in December. Pop-up vaccination clinics have been setup across the state. If you are having an event or know of a location with a lot of foot traffic, the state can work with you to have a pop-up clinic available. Eli Issaguirre is the contact person for those. There is still concern within the group as to how the state is determining COVID-19 vaccination and COVID rates among the Latinx population, as some counties do not report Latinx population data accurately. At the last meeting Dr. Robert Orellana, an epidemiologist from MDHHS and the CDC, was present to answer some questions. He admitted that some of the county information is rather slim and has been tasked by the group to investigate further and report back on his findings and ways in which the state or MDHHS can keep this from happening again in the future.
- g. E.D. attended the IMSC (Interagency Migrant Services Committee) meeting. Jackie Chandler delivered a presentation on farmworker health. E.D. along with other committee members advocated for a farmworker health subcommittee to assess where there is overlap in efforts across the state and where there are gaps in services being provided in order to ensure that resources are appropriately distributed and utilized. The motion for a farmworker subcommittee was voted on and approved. The Farmworker Health Subcommittee has been formed and will be meeting soon.

- h. E.D. attended the Latin Americans United for Progress (LAUP) Gala in Holland, MI. E.D. was asked to deliver an address on the importance and necessity of working with non-profits across the state, especially those who serve Hispanic and Latinx populations.
- i. E.D. wanted to give a "Thank you" to LLEAD and Commissioner Florenio Hernandez. On October 29<sup>th</sup> Al Flores and Florenio Hernandez hosted a Meet and Greet for E.D. on the north end of Lansing. The event was well attended with over 86 individuals in attendance. While the purpose of the event was to welcome E.D. into her role, the unity in the room and networking among Hispanic leadership from across the state could be felt. Thank you to Francisca Garcia, Commissioner Florenio Hernandez, LLEAD President Al Flores, Diana Flores for her catering donation and Sir Pizza for accommodating our venue needs. Many of those who were at the Meet and Greet are present for this meeting and E.D. thanks them for their attendance as well.
- j. Lastly E.D. announced that last week we celebrated Veteran's Day. She would like to give a special thank you to the veterans who serve on the Commission, Anthony Rubio and Jeremiah Hernandez.

## **8) Committee Reports**

- a) Finance Planning:** Treasurer Esperanza Cantu submitted the FY2022 budget for review and approval. She states that the budget looks very similar to what was submitted and approved for the previous year. The FY2022 budget is \$295,100. There have been many questions recently surrounding the budget. Commissioner Cantu has confidence that the new E.D. and new leadership will move forward with the budget in the right direction. She announced that she is not running for reelection. In reviewing the budget, Vice Chair Sonya Hernandez asks if the Executive Director's salary and benefits are being taken from the HLCOM budget. E.D. informs the commission that salary and benefits for the Executive Director, and the salary of the Administrative Assistant are being taken from the HLCOM budget. No further questions were posed.

**MOTION: Commissioner Barber-Lopez moved to approve the FY2022 budget, with support from Commissioner Bernal. The motion was passed.**

- b) Public Relations:** Vice Chair Sonya Hernandez reported that the committee has not met. She shared that the Hispanic Heritage Month Awards have been postponed. Now that the commission knows what the new budget is, she hopes to be able to move forward and have something done before the end of the year.
- c) Advocacy:** No report available. The committee has not met. Juan Marinez is no longer a commissioner. The Advocacy Committee will need a new Chairperson. Commissioner Juanita Bocanegra will no longer be a part of this committee.
- d) Special Ad Hoc Elections Committee:** Vice Chair Sonya Hernandez reports that Juan Marinez was the Chairperson of this committee. Due to the fact that he is no longer a commissioner, Commissioner Anthony Rubio took on that role, however, he is not in attendance. As the Vice Chair previously announced, elections of the new Executive Committee will take place under the New Business section of the agenda.
- e) Special Ad Hoc Bylaws Committee:** Commissioner Jeremiah Hernandez reported that this committee was created to review attendance requirements and time commitment required by commissioners. In reviewing the bylaws, the committee found additional topics in the bylaws that need to be reviewed and revised. A committee member proposed a new executive position of Immediate Past Chair. The committee is still reviewing this position and has not made any decision. Any changes the committee proposes to the bylaws will be presented to the Commission to be voted on. Commissioner Jeremiah Hernandez is requesting that a new Chairperson be appointed for the committee since his term is ending this year and he is not seeking reappointment. Commissioner Consuela-Barber-Lopez added that the bylaws are very outdated. She wants to be sure that the bylaws are very clear in detailing responsibilities.

Processes need to be put into place for future Commissioners. Vice Chair Sonya Hernandez appointed Commissioner Barber-Lopez as the Chair of the Bylaws Committee. Commissioner Barber-Lopez accepted.

**9) Public Comment:**

Francisca gave instructions on how public comment would work. Guests were informed the meeting is being recorded. Speakers are to identify themselves by name before their public comment. Speakers will be called in the order their request is received.

**a) Guest Poppy Hernandez, Executive Director of Office of Global Michigan**

- a. E.D. Poppy Hernandez shared that part of what drew her to work with OGM was this commission. She worked alongside the commission during her time in the Governor's office. She had a desire to continue that work along with working with the other ethnic commissions.
- b. The OGM has three divisions, one of which is MITS. MITS stands for Michigan International Talent Solutions, another is the Office of Refugee Services and the Ethnic Commissions. The primary goal of MITS is to fill the gap of talent with non-U.S. born persons. The goal is to do that through barrier reduction and licensing, language access services, etc. The Governor's office is open to hearing from this commission and local constituents as to how they can meet those goals. MITS is in process to providing technical assistance for the MI ECHO scholarship program through MCAN. The Governor's office has been working with OGM during the pandemic to address the deficit of language access to non-English speaking Michiganders.
- c. The Office of Refugee Services is currently working with the Governor's office in welcoming Afghani refugees to our state. Michigan has committed to welcoming 1,600 refugees. So far, we have welcomed 375. A white house representative came to Michigan to see how we are doing this work since Michigan is doing such a great job. Michigan has until December 31<sup>st</sup> to welcome 1,200 more refugees.
- d. E.D. Poppy Hernandez has been working with all 3 Ethnic Commission to get their operations on point. E.D. Hernandez is dedicated to getting the commissions everything they need to carry out their strategic goals and priorities and aligning the commissions' priorities with those of the Governor. Patience is needed from the commission as this process is going to take some time.
- e. E.D. Hernandez thanked Commissioner Sonya Hernandez for her work with the MI ECHO scholarship. This scholarship is for DACA students. Commissioner Sonya Hernandez strongly advocated for this scholarship and will continue to work at the advisory committee at MCAN in overseeing that the scholarship process is carried out correctly. She also thanked the Commissioners for their engagement and participation in the Racial Disparities Task Force, Protect Michigan Commission, and the Equity and Inclusion initiative for State of Michigan employees.

**b) Dorian Slaybod, Staff Attorney Farmworker Legal Services:** Mr. Slaybod reported that he has two issues he would like to focus on and present to the Commission. The first is lack of independent family, friendly housing in Michigan. Since most of the farm jobs are located along the lake shore there already is a lack of housing available and what is available is not affordable for farmworker families. The vast majority of farmworker housing that is available is owned by the employer. Often times, when employees sign an employment contract, they also sign to leave the premises within 48 to 72 hours. This puts the employee in a vulnerable situation for eviction and/or firing. The other issue Mr. Slaybod wants the Commission to be aware of is heat stress deaths. This year there have been 43 deaths due to heat stress. E.D. asks if there are any cooling mandates in Michigan. Mr. Slaybod stated there are only a few states that have these mandates, Michigan is not one of them.

**c) Marisol Garcia, Voces De La Comunidad:** Ms. Garcia is a grassroots organizer in Lansing. She wanted to highlight some of work that Voces De La Comunidad has done in the last year so that the Commission is aware of the needs in the Lansing area. At the beginning of the pandemic Ms. Garcia learned that there were many families in Lansing who were not able to receive any kind of government help or assistance due to citizenship status, lack of knowledge of qualifications for assistance, limited English speaking and at times due to fear of asking for help. Voces De La

Comunidad provided care packages for these families in partnership with Casa De Rosado as a distribution center. Voces De La Comunidad also partners with Planned Parenthood for bi-monthly Latinx leader brunches. They collaborated with the ICHD to host a Spanish virtual townhall on COIVD, and a family picnic with a COVID vaccine clinic.

- d) Elias Lopez, MSU Migrant Student Services:** Mr. Lopez wanted to provide an update for the Commission on the Migrant Student Services (MSS) programs at MSU. MSS works primarily with farmworker families. Their Identification and Recruitment department identifies children of farmworkers with special attention to those who may not have access to education. This program operates in 52 counties in Michigan. The HEP (High School Equivalency Program) is for non-high school graduates, The HEP is mainly operating online because they found that more non-traditional students were enrolling into the program. The program is currently operating in Hart, MI and Dowagiac, MI. CAMP (College Assistance Migrant Program) recruits farmworkers to come to MSU. This program has been at MSU for 21 years. The department is also actively working in trying to retain their graduates in Michigan. Mr. Lopez states that they do need more support in building a relationship with the MSU Department of Agriculture; not very many students are entering this field. Mr. Lopez adds that all students in the MSS programs are required to participate in a study abroad experience and an internship experience. Lastly Mr. Lopez reports work being done with a program called La Cosecha which is in partnership with the MSU Department of Entomology. This program works with Latino farm owners to better understand pesticide information.
- e) Yolanda Gonzales, MSU MSS Student:** Ms. Gonzales wanted to share her experience with MSS. The programs have allowed her to study abroad and has provided internship opportunities. The MSS programs have supported her through her navigation from high school to college, especially as a first-generation college student. She would like to see more job opportunities in Michigan.
- f) Maria Vancore, LCLAA President:** Maria is the chapter president for LCLAA. LCLAA has 3 active chapters in Michigan. The majority of LCLAA's work is with voter education, registering voters, assisting senior citizens with absentee ballots, and helping translate ballot information into Spanish. LCLAA also collaborates with other Lansing organizations. LCLAA holds an annual Scholarship dinner for high school students. They need more donations to increase the number of scholarships they give. They are excited to be able to hold their scholarship dinner upcoming in 2022 after the hiatus due to the pandemic.
- g) Oscar Castaneda, Community Organizer, Detroit Hispanic Development Corporation:** Mr. Castaneda agrees with the sentiment in the room; Lansing is good at working together, however, too many times services are overlapped. He encourages the community to think about ways to minimize repeating services so that time and resources are not wasted. Mr. Castaneda reports that on December 1<sup>st</sup> there will be a meeting with the Speaker of the House to discuss the Driver's License issue. He encourages those in the room to show up on December 2<sup>nd</sup> to testify in support of the issue.
- h) Ramiro Garcia, Intern to Sarah Anthony:** Mr. Garcia is present to share an update on the work of the Latino Caucus. There are currently some UIA (Unemployment Insurance Agency) reform bills. The black and brown populations in Michigan have been deeply affected by the pandemic. The UIA reform bill package seeks to update outdated qualification policies for unemployment benefits which will help black and brown people in Michigan receive unemployment benefits. In addition, a police package has been introduced that seeks to reform policing policies by addressing the use of force policies and banning the use of no-knock warrants. This list is not exclusive. Lastly, Mr. Garcia reports that the caucus was successful in obtaining \$2M for the education of first-generation college students. These are only a few of the issues the Caucus has been working on. Mr. Garcia informed the Commissioners that they can reach out to Mary Cavanaugh or Darren Camerelli as points of contact for the Caucus. The Commissioners will be meeting with the Caucus members virtually on December 8<sup>th</sup>.
- i) Bob Pena, Ingham County Commissioner:** Mr. Pena wanted to report to those in attendance that the ICHD has COVID stats for black and brown Latinos. Mr. Pena reported that there are already Afghani refugees living in Lansing. CACS and Cristo Rey Community Center are working together to house, feed and clothe the refugees. Currently most of the refugees are being housed in hotels and motels, but they are slowly being moved into apartments and houses. St. Vincent's Catholic Charities is taking donations for household items.

- j) **Alejandra Rengifo, CMU Instructor:** Mrs. Rengifo encourages those in attendance to think about the migrants that are still stuck at the border while our state is welcoming the Afghani refugees. Also, not to forget about the DREAMERS. She believes that as a community we should do much better in holding our elected officials accountable and remember the power of our vote.
- k) **Guillermo Lopez, Lansing Resident:** Mr. Lopez wanted to remind those in attendance of the aging population in Lansing. He reports that more resources are needed for the elderly. Mr. Lopez encouraged the commissioners to check on the senior citizen agencies in their area. Mr. Lopez also reported that the Lansing Eastern High School football stadium will be named after Gilbert Saucedo who passed away in 2018. He was a Lansing School District teacher and coach.
- l) **Theresa Rosado, Owner of Casa De Rosado:** Ms. Rosado wanted to share her love of the Lansing community. She opened her Galeria and Cultural Center in Lansing 5 years ago but has been doing the work for 28 years. The Lansing community has been very welcoming to her and her events. Over the years she has exhibited LWOP (Life Without Parole) youth art, a Dia de los Muertos celebration for 25 years, and a variety of social justice issues. Her center is a place where the community can enjoy art, music, and dance. She is in the middle of the 501c3 process. In order to complete this she will need more financial support. Commissioner Florenso Hernandez shared that the community will be hosting an online fundraiser for Casa De Rosas to begin on the Day of Giving.
- m) **Traci Ruiz, Lansing Resident:** Traci Ruiz is a retired Lansing Police Department officer. She has been helping indigent senior citizens in Lansing for 20 years. She knocks on doors to give care packages to senior citizens in need. About 400 boxes are given annually. Ms. Ruiz passed out donation envelopes around the room for those interested in supporting this work. Ms. Ruiz also wanted to invite those in the room to the Greater Lansing Christmas Symposium at The View on December 14<sup>th</sup>. She will send a flyer to distribute among the Commissioners. E.D. wanted to mention that Ms. Ruiz has adopted the oldest Latina in Lansing. Ms. Salinas is 103 years old.

**10) Old Business:**

- a. E.D. reported that the Bylaws Committee is meeting to review the attendance policy per the questions raised at the October meeting.

**11) New Business:**

- a. Since not all commissioners have been able to access their email to review the 2022 meeting dates, Vice Chair Sonya Hernandez requested that a Google poll be created and sent to each commissioner for review and approval. The poll responses would be due by November 26<sup>th</sup>. Due to lack of access to state accounts, Vice Chair has requested state devices for each individual commissioner. In order to ensure everyone participates in the selection of the 2022 meeting dates, HLCOM staff will reach out to Commissioners via text.

**MOTION: Motion was made by Commissioner Bernal to have 2022 meeting dates sent by Google poll, with support from Commissioner Jeremiah Hernandez. Motion passed.**

- b. Presentation of slate for the executive committee was given. Ballots were passed out to commissioners. E.D. will count the votes since no members of the Elections Committee were present. Results were as follows: Chair, 8 votes for Jesse Bernal, Vice Chair, 8 votes for Sonya Hernandez, Secretary, 8 votes for Juanita Bocanegra, Treasurer, 8 votes for Florenso Hernandez.

**MOTION: Motion was made by Commissioner Cantu to accept the election results, with support from Commissioner Bocanegra. Motion passed.**

**Announcements:**

- a. Commissioner Consuela Barber-Lopez shared cybersecurity warning in relation to children, specifically black and brown children. As adults we should stay on top of the technology

changes and learn security measures so that we can have these difficult conversations with our youth and protect them.


- b. 2022 meeting dates and locations will be posted on the website.
- c. Commissioner Bernal thanked the commission for their nomination. He is excited to work with the E.D. and wants to empower and support her in the work she needs to do.

**12) Adjournment**

**MOTION: Motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Bocanegra and supported by Commissioner Barber-Lopez. Motion passed and the meeting was adjourned.**

Respectfully submitted,

\_\_\_\_\_  
Monica B. Reyes, Chairperson      Date

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Juanita Bocanegra, Trustee      Date