



**Testimony of Will Gonzalez, Executive Director of Ceiba
Pennsylvania Legislative Reapportionment Commission Hearing
October 13, 2021**

Buenas tardes - Good afternoon.

My name is Will Gonzalez.

I am the Executive Director of Ceiba. Ceiba is a coalition of Hispanic community-based organizations in Philadelphia whose mission is to promote the economic development and financial inclusion of Philadelphia's Latino community through collaborations and advocacy aimed at ensuring their access to quality housing.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to expand on our previous testimony about the growth of the Hispanic community in Pennsylvania.

The importance of the Hispanic community to the Commonwealth cannot be overstated.

Growth in the Hispanic population far outpaced that of the whole state and successfully offset the declines in population of other groups in the Commonwealth.

Pennsylvania's population only grew 2.4% between 2010 and 2020 or by about 300,000 people. In the same period, Pennsylvania's Hispanic population grew 45.8%, or by about 330,000 people. In other words, the Latino share of total population change in Pennsylvania was 110%. Pennsylvania's 1.05 million Hispanic community constitutes 8.1% of the population of the Keystone state. Of the 12 states with at least 1 million Hispanics, Pennsylvania saw the fastest population growth during the last decade, according to the Pew Research Center.

Hispanic population growth fueled increases in population in many municipalities in Eastern Pennsylvania:

- Philadelphia - total population up 5% thanks to 25.6% Hispanic population growth
- Allentown - total population up 6.6% thanks to 30.9% Hispanic population growth
- Reading - total population up 8% thanks to 24.4% Hispanic population growth
- Bethlehem - total population up 1% thanks to 25.2% Hispanic population growth
- Hazleton - total population up 28.4% thanks to 85% Hispanic population growth
- Lebanon - total population up 5.2% thanks to 43.3% Hispanic population growth
- York - total population up 2.7% thanks to 21.2% Hispanic population growth

Hispanic population growth was important for Harrisburg. Pennsylvania's Capital City only grew by 571 people in 2020 (1.1% - from 49,528 in 2010 to 50,099 in 2020) yet its Hispanic Population grew by 1,983 people (22.2% - from 8,939 in 2010 to 10,922 in 2020). In other words, the Hispanic population of Harrisburg accounted for 340% of the city's growth in population.

In Scranton, the positive impact of the Hispanic population on the total population growth of the Electric City was 15-fold. Scranton's population grew by 239 people in 2020 (0.3% - from 76,089 in 2010 to 76,328 in 2020). In the same period, the Hispanic population of Scranton increased by 3,766 (50% - from 7,531 to 11,297).

The municipalities with the largest Hispanic population in Pennsylvania are:

- Philadelphia - 235,758
- Allentown - 66,069
- Reading - 63,725
- Bethlehem - 22,886
- Lancaster - 22,229
- Hazelton - 17,498
- York - 15,098
- Lebanon - 11,718
- Scranton - 11,297
- Harrisburg - 10,922
- Norristown - 9,688
- Wilke-Barre - 9,309
- Easton - 6,357
- Chambersburg - 4,337
- Coatesville - 3,765

The municipalities with the highest percent of Hispanics (minimum of 1,00 Hispanics):

- Reading - 67%
- Hazelton - 58.4%
- Allentown - 52.5%
- Lebanon - 43.7%
- Kennett Square - 39.1%
- Lancaster - 38.3%
- York - 33.7%
- Bethlehem - 30.2%
- Coatesville - 28.2%
- Norristown - 27.1%
- Easton - 22.6%
- Harrisburg - 21.8%
- Steelton - 21.7%
- Wilkes-Barre - 21%
- Chambersburg - 19.8%
- Wilson - 18.4%
- East Stroudsburg - 16.8%

The 2020 Census showed the following counties as top in Hispanic population:

- Philadelphia County - 235,758
- Berks County - 99,550
- Lehigh County - 96,981
- Lancaster County - 61,171
- Montgomery County - 54,512
- Luzerne County - 46,898
- Northampton County - 44,597
- Chester County - 43,542
- Bucks County - 39,770
- York County - 39,360
- Dauphin County - 31,251
- Monroe County - 28,558
- Delaware County - 26,772
- Lebanon County - 20,348

The counties with the highest percent of Hispanics relative to their total population are:

- Lehigh County– 25.9%
- Berks County – 23.2%
- Monroe County – 17%
- Philadelphia County - 14.9%
- Luzerne County - 14.4%
- Northampton County - 14.3%
- Lebanon County - 14.2%
- Pike County - 11.5%
- Lancaster County - 11.1%
- Dauphin County - 10.9%
- York County - 8.6%

The counties that had the largest percent increase in the Hispanic share of their population between 2010 and 2020 are:

- Cameron County - 352.6% - increase of 67 people
- Luzerne County - 118.2% - increase of 25,407 people
- Schuylkill County - 97.6% increase of 3,984 people
- Butler County - 88.8% increase of 1,724 people
- Cumberland County - 85.7% increase of 5,527 people
- Northumberland County - 84.2% increase of 1,898 people
- Mifflin County - 83.3% increase of 445 people
- Beaver County - 80.7% increase of 1,613 people
- Allegheny County - 80% increase of 15,255 people
- Lawrence County - 77.8% increase of 724 people
- Lackawanna County - 71% increase of 7,585

These numbers show that the impact of the growth in Hispanic Population was felt in every corner of the Commonwealth.

The Hispanic communities in our Commonwealth are communities of interest. They are self-defined groups of people who share bilingual and bicultural characteristics; have their own culturally and linguistically appropriate civic organizations, churches, schools, business corridors, and social institutions; they share common interests; and mostly live in compact footprints without geographic barriers.

We urge you to draw legislative districts that take into account the streets, neighborhoods, and important hubs that make Hispanic communities unique; consider landmarks, cultural districts, industries, employers, where kids go to school, where families go to church and the location of neighborhood based and social service organizations which serve them.

Ensuring Hispanic civic engagement through voting and strong working relationships with their elected officials will bolster the economic power and global competitiveness of Pennsylvania.

Between 2010 and 2020, Hispanic buying power in Pennsylvania grew to tenth among the states with the fastest growth in the Hispanic market (112%) according to the Selig Center for Economic Growth of the University of Georgia. Hispanic buying power increased substantially over the last 30 years in the US. Hispanic buying power accounted for 11.1% of U.S. buying power in 2020, up from only 5% in 1990. The same report found that the Hispanic market is the largest minority market in the US and continues to expand briskly. Hispanic spending power grew to \$1.9 trillion in 2020, an increase of 87% from 2010. This \$1.9 trillion in Hispanic spending power is larger than the GDP of Italy and slightly smaller than the GDP of France.

Hispanics are also helping Pennsylvania's vitality. As Pennsylvania's population grows older, with a median age of 41 years old, the Latino population's median age is 26 years old.

Because Hispanics tend to be younger overall than the Non-Hispanic White and African Americans neighbors, Hispanics begin forming households at a higher pace than other demographic groups. Accordingly, a study by the Urban Institute predicts that by 2040, fully 70 percent of new U.S. homeowners will be Hispanic. The 2020 State of Hispanic Homeownership Report from the National Association of Hispanic Real Estate Professionals found that Hispanics now have a 48-49% rate of homeownership, up from 47.5% in 2019. In Pennsylvania, the Hispanic homeownership rate is 42.8%.

The economic power of Hispanics in Pennsylvania is also manifested in its potential for further growth. Pennsylvania has a large and young Hispanic population that continues to grow. While 8% of the overall population of the Commonwealth is Hispanic, 12 % of students in K-12 education are Hispanic.

Hispanic enrollment in our commonwealth's school districts is poised to make Pennsylvania stronger. The school districts with the highest Hispanic enrollment are:

- Reading - 80.70% 14,364 students
- Allentown - 71% 11,409 students
- Lebanon - 65% 3,312 students
- Hazelton - 56% 6,720 students
- York - 46% 2,506 students
- Bethlehem - 41% 5,532 students
- Norristown - 40% 3,001 students
- Harrisburg - 35% 2,223 students
- Scranton - 29% 2,902 students
- Philadelphia - 21% 42,618 students
- Pittsburgh - 3% 771 students

The strength of Hispanic students in Pennsylvania transcends K-12 education. According to a report from Excelencia in Education, using data from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Latinos in Pennsylvania graduate at a higher rate from four-year institutions than Latinos nationally—61 percent versus 51 percent, respectively.

There are many more manifestations of the positive impact on Pennsylvania by its Hispanic communities and their potential to keep the Keystone State growing.

It's important to note, however, that Hispanics are also a community with people struggling to overcome poverty, lack of education, and poor access to quality healthcare. Keeping Hispanic communities of interest undivided will help local jurisdictions and our state as a whole better meet these challenges for the benefit of all. A chain is only as strong as its weakest link.

Redistricting is a double-edged sword that cuts depending on the hand that wields it. Mapmakers can draw legislative districts to ensure that communities are kept whole to maximize the prospect of their residents and institutions working together — or they can slash neighborhoods into fragments to minimize their power.

We have an opportunity here. Let's make the best of it.

Pennsylvania's Hispanics are ready to be stewards of change rather than victims of it.