



CONGRESSIONAL HISPANIC CAUCUS

116th Congress

July 22, 2020

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The Honorable John Cornyn
United States Senator
517 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Ted Cruz
United States Senator
127A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Cornyn and Senator Cruz:

With each passing day, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to deteriorate the health and economic well-being of millions of Americans across the country. Sadly, our fellow Texans – particularly Latinos and communities of color – are now bearing the brunt of this suffering. It is imperative that the federal government take robust action to provide the assistance that our constituents desperately need. To that end, I urge you to do everything in your power to ensure that the Senate takes up the HEROES Act or similarly inclusive legislation.

On July 15, Texas experienced a record-high of nearly 10,800 new COVID-19 cases and 110 deaths.ⁱ In May, the unemployment rate reached 13% as nearly 2.8 million Texas have filed for unemployment relief since the start of the pandemic.ⁱⁱ As the state with the highest uninsured rate, it is tragic that almost 660,000 Texans have lost their health coverage due to the pandemic-driven economic downturn.ⁱⁱⁱ Despite these major challenges, Latinos – on pace to be the largest ethnic group in the state by the middle of next year – are facing conditions that are even more dire.^{iv} As concluded in a recent UnidosUS report entitled *The Latino Community in the Time of Coronavirus: The Case for a Broad and Inclusive Government Response*:

- **Latinos are disproportionately contracting and dying from COVID-19.** As of July 1, Latinos make up 35% of all COVID-19 cases for which race/ ethnicity data are available, but only 18.5% of the total U.S. population. Disturbingly, Latino children and youth are getting sick and dying at the highest rates. As of July 1, 55% of all confirmed cases in children (ages 5-17) and 43% of all cases in youth (ages 18-29) are Latino; Latino children and youth make up roughly 40% of all deaths in both age categories.

- **Latinos have been hit hard by the economic downturn.** They are twice as likely to have been laid off as a result of the pandemic and experience a higher unemployment rate (14.5%) compared to the national rate of 11.1%.
- **Latino and immigrant workers are overrepresented in essential jobs.** Latinos are 54% of agricultural workers, 35% of meat processing workers, and 29% of medical assistants, putting them at high risk of exposure to COVID-19. Most cannot afford to stop working and lack worker protections to self-isolate if exposed.
- **Latinos have not been fully included in COVID-19 relief and recovery legislation to date.** Economic disparities continue to grow under the virus: 5.5 million people—including Latino citizens, legal residents, mixed-status families, and undocumented taxpayers—were excluded from the Economic Impact Payments under the CARES Act. In the first round of Payment Protection Program (PPP) loans, only 4% went to Latino small business owners and roughly 12% went to Black and Latino small business owners in subsequent rounds.

These disparities and the exclusion of Latinos from health and economic relief have deep, negative impacts on our state and the report itself is an indictment of congressional inaction. It is no surprise, then, that according to a national survey by SOMOS Health Care, UnidosUS, MoveOn, and conducted by Latino Decisions, Latinos strongly support the policy solutions included in the HEROES Act.^v Specifically, among Latinos in Texas, the poll showed that:

- 29% of Latino households in Texas did not receive any support from the CARES Act. That is one reason that about two out of three Latinos in the state believe that the initial stimulus was not enough for people to get through the next couple of months.
- 82% support renewing 2-year work permits for TPS and DACA recipients. The HEROES Act provides automatic extension of these work permits. In Texas, there are over 124,000 DACA recipients^{vi} and 48,600 TPS holders.^{vii}
- 91% support federal funding for COVID-19 treatment for all people and 90% support testing for all. This is especially important in Texas, where Latinos make up 61% of the uninsured and where 22% of Latino households have lost their employer-provided health insurance.^{viii}
- 77% are concerned that they would not be able to afford COVID-19 treatment if they fell sick.
- 58% have experienced either a job loss or a pay cut. 22% experienced both.
- 58% have difficulty buying necessities such as food, medicine, and household items while 40% have trouble making rent or mortgage payments.

The growing health and economic challenges and deepening disparities experienced by Latinos and other people of color are well documented in the UnidosUS report and elsewhere. The Senate's failure to rise to the occasion and provide relief to our communities is unacceptable. That is why I

urge you to respond as swiftly and aggressively as possible and call on your colleagues and Senate leadership to take up and pass the HEROES Act, or at the very least an inclusive bill that meets the emergency needs of our state's Latinos and all Texans.

Sincerely,



Joaquin Castro
Chairman
Congressional Hispanic Caucus

ⁱ <https://thehill.com/homenews/coronavirus-report/507591-texas-reports-record-highs-for-daily-coronavirus-cases-deaths?amp>

ⁱⁱ <https://apps.texastribune.org/features/2020/texas-unemployment/>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.texastribune.org/2020/07/14/texans-health-insurance-jobs-pandemic/>

^{iv} <https://www.texastribune.org/2020/06/25/texas-hispanic-population-grows-2-million/>

^v <https://latinodecisions.com/polls-and-research/somos-unidosus-national-survey-of-latinos-covid-19-impact-and-heroes-act-national-survey-of-latinos-may-2020/>

^{vi} <https://www.governing.com/gov-data/other/daca-approved-participants-by-state.html>

^{vii} <https://www.newamericaneconomy.org/locations/texas/>

^{viii} <https://www.texastribune.org/2020/07/14/texans-health-insurance-jobs-pandemic/>