



# How to Address the Devastating COVID-19 Impacts on Latino Families

Latino Parent Voices: Policy Recommendations



CENTER FOR  
SOCIAL POLICY



Abriendo Puertas  
Opening Doors

# National Outlook

## What's happening?

- ▶ Latino families contribute more than \$700 billion to the economy annually<sup>1</sup>, and have been the major driver for small business growth in the country over the last decade.
- ▶ Currently one in three Latino small businesses are in danger of failure.<sup>2</sup>
- ▶ Latino children make up 28% of public school students<sup>3</sup>, and yet one in three Latino households does not have access to the internet needed for online school.<sup>4</sup>

## What's at stake?

The future of our country is inextricably linked to the wellbeing of Latino families. If we don't act now, America will face a deeper economic depression, workforce instability, and soaring school drop-out rates.

## What can we do?

This report focuses on the most promising policy solutions based on the latest national data to help families at a time when they are in dire need for additional support.

## Jump to:

***Health Policy >>***

***Education Policy >>***

***Economic Well-Being Policy >>***

***Social Justice & Police Reform >>***

***Whole-Family Policy >>***

<sup>1</sup>[U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce](#)

<sup>2</sup>[Brookings Institute](#)

<sup>3</sup>[Pew Research Center](#)

<sup>4</sup>[National Latino Parent Survey](#)

# Policies to Improve Access to Health Insurance and Healthcare

## Provide more state funding for sick leave

Latinos are the least likely to have access to paid sick days of any racial or ethnic group in the United States.<sup>5</sup> The challenges associated with COVID-19 have identified the need for enhanced sick leave across the United States.

### Solutions Latino Families Support:

*Latino Parent Voices: National Survey* >>

81%

### SICK LEAVE

of families interviewed supported paid sick leave for all workers. This ensures those who are sick or have sick family members can take time off without losing pay.

### Policy recommendations:

- ▶ Expansion of states enacting workforce paid sick leave policies.
- ▶ Expansion of the federal paid sick leave requirements within the [Families First Coronavirus Response Act](#) to provide a permanent program.

### Proven successes:

- ▶ There are currently 13 states that have enacted paid sick leave policies.<sup>6</sup>
- ▶ State guidance on how to enact sick leave policies from [The Urban Institute](#).

<sup>5</sup> [Center for American Progress](#)

<sup>6</sup> [National Conference of State Legislatures](#)

## Expand ACA and healthcare supports

Latino families are in dire need of more healthcare services. Lack of access to quality care is exacerbating the spread of the Coronavirus.

### Policy recommendations:

- ▶ Enact swift emergency Medicaid guidelines to include COVID-19 testing and treatment for low-income populations regardless of immigration status.
- ▶ Expand access to the ACA marketplace to undocumented immigrants.

### Proven successes:

- ▶ Latino voters have long supported allowing undocumented immigrants to be able to access plans on the ACA marketplace.<sup>7</sup>
  - 67% of Latinos believe that anyone living in the United States should be eligible to buy or receive health care regardless of citizenship status, contradictory to the current bill that restricts coverage to American citizens.
  - 75% of Latino Democrats supported expansion compared with 63% among Republicans and 60% among Independents.
- ▶ Colorado has recently passed legislation to decrease the cost of health insurance by implementing a “health insurance affordability” fee on some of the state’s providers to help provide access to low-income and uninsured residents, regardless of immigration status.<sup>8</sup>
- ▶ Other states have proven expanding Medicaid successfully narrows the gap in access to health insurance between Latinos and non-Latinos.<sup>9</sup>

## Expand access to mental health services

Research has already identified heightened mental health concerns for children during COVID-19 across the country.<sup>10</sup> Latinos have lower access to mental health resources than the general population.<sup>11</sup> Stress and trauma are further compounded by the disruption of a consistent school routine, which deepens feelings of fear, uncertainty, and isolation. Federal and state policies must play a key role in supporting the efforts of communities to holistically address the needs of all students during this time and take action to eliminate structural and systemic inequities.

---

<sup>7</sup> [Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Center for Health Policy](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Colorado Legislature](#)

<sup>9</sup> [Brookings Institute](#)

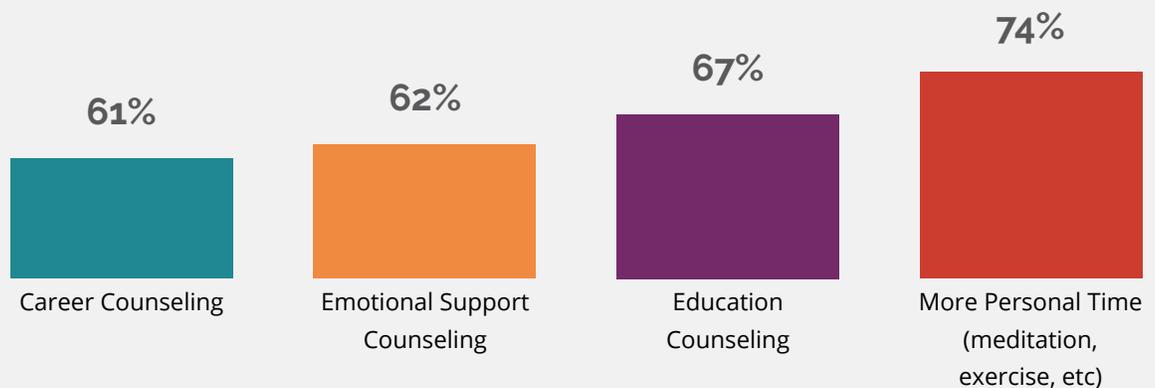
<sup>10</sup> [Kaiser Family Foundation](#)

<sup>11</sup> [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](#)

## Policy recommendations:

- ▶ Permanent increases in funding to mental health providers that accept Medicaid and that operate in under-served communities providing culturally-appropriate services.
- ▶ Permanent increases in funding for peer support and community-based services.
- ▶ Invest in trauma-informed and whole-learner supports for youth that address the impact of structural and systemic inequities including social determinants of health in low-income communities.

## When asked what additional support you need as a parent or primary caregiver:



## Proven successes:

- ▶ States that have expanded Medicaid are able to provide more coverage to people with mental health conditions, especially in under-served communities. People are less likely to skip medications due to cost, more likely to seek regular care for their ongoing health conditions<sup>12</sup>, and report improvements in their overall health.<sup>13</sup>
- ▶ Medicaid expansion makes care affordable, removing barriers for people with mental illness by allowing people to qualify based on income, rather than a disability determination.<sup>14</sup>
- ▶ Entire families benefit when adults gain access to health coverage. Children of low-income families are more likely to get coverage and receive annual well-child visits, which include mental health screenings, when their parents have Medicaid coverage.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>12</sup> [JAMA](#)

<sup>13</sup> [National Bureau of Economic Research](#)

<sup>14</sup> [National Alliance on Mental Illness](#)

<sup>15</sup> [Health Reform Monitoring Survey](#)

# Policies to Address Educational Inequalities

## Increase access to internet and technology

Families who do not have regular access to the internet are likely to continue facing educational inequalities as schools move increasingly toward use of online education tools.

### Policy recommendations:

- ▶ We agree with [researchers from Brookings](#) who have suggested that the federal government should implement support similar to the Broadband Technologies Opportunity Program (2009) to address more systemic inequalities in internet access for rural families. If expanded now we could see a drastic decline in the digital divide facing Latinos who live in rural areas.

### Solutions Latino Families Support:

[Latino Parent Voices: National Survey](#) >>



### BETTER INTERNET

of families requested better or more reliable internet

### Proven successes:

- ▶ Families that have access to high-speed internet, digital devices, and technological support will be prepared for an integrated learning environment. Long-term investments in broadband and digital capacity for low-income communities ensures access to equitable and integrated learning for families.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> [Common Sense Media](#)

- ▶ The most common and practical approach school districts are taking across the country is to provide portable Wi-Fi hotspots to families who lack access to the internet at home.<sup>17</sup> We propose that the ability for families who need them to access free Wi-Fi should be extended indefinitely.

## Latino Parent Voices: Joana's Story



**“How Can My Children Learn Online  
If the Internet Gets Cut Off?”**

## Extend opportunities for learning and development

In order to help Latino students make up lost ground during the transition to distance learning, policy makers should move quickly to increase access to education resources. We support the America Forward Biden/Harris Transition Memo<sup>17</sup> and recommend a bold infusion of federal and local funding to address disruptions to learning and development and close widening opportunity gaps in the wake of COVID-19 for learners of all ages.

### Policy recommendations:

- ▶ Expand out-of-school-time, access to tutoring, school year length, parent-engagement and summer school programs. Policy makers should subsidize participation by using title I, II, III, and IDEA funding so that all families can take advantage.<sup>18</sup>
- ▶ Invest in funding innovations around holistic learning loss and undoing structural inequities to develop new learning delivery systems. This should include competency-based education, culturally-relevant, and remote learning approaches that focus on the opportunities for skill development of the whole child.
- ▶ Invest in longer-term funded projects for whole child development partnerships between educational institutions (early education, K-12, higher education, and opportunity-youth serving organizations), nonprofit partners, and community organizations; and may include research organizations.

<sup>17</sup> [America Forward](#)

<sup>18</sup> [Education Week](#)



### Proven successes:

- ▶ The National Latino Parent survey found Latino families would support out-of-school time, including extending the school year (75% support), and having longer school days to help kids make up some ground lost during homeschooling (64% support).<sup>19</sup>
- ▶ Research has identified that students who have access to one-on-one or small group tutoring during the school day show marked gains in learning.<sup>20</sup>
- ▶ Whole child development approaches effectively and simultaneously address multiple areas, such as child and family economic supports, education, employment, health, well-being, and social capital. Research indicates that these approaches lead to improved child outcomes by successfully connecting the well-being of families to their children’s social, emotional, physical, and economic well-being.<sup>21</sup>

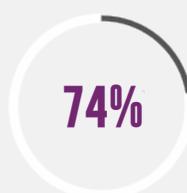
### Solutions Latino Parents Support to Improve Distance Learning

*Latino Parent Voices: National Survey >>*

#### SOCIAL EMOTIONAL SUPPORT



of parents need additional emotional support counseling for their children



of parents requested more one-on-one tutoring options for their children

<sup>19</sup> [National Latino Parent Survey](#)

<sup>20</sup> [National Bureau of Economic Research](#)

<sup>21</sup> [U.S. Government Accountability Office](#)

## Expand access to childcare and childcare business supports

With the closures of schools across the country it became immediately clear that families are facing tremendous adversity as we collectively depend on our schools for quality early learning childcare.<sup>22</sup> It is critical to support the generation of new revenue streams to support the workforce in the early childhood development and learning sector.

### Policy recommendations:

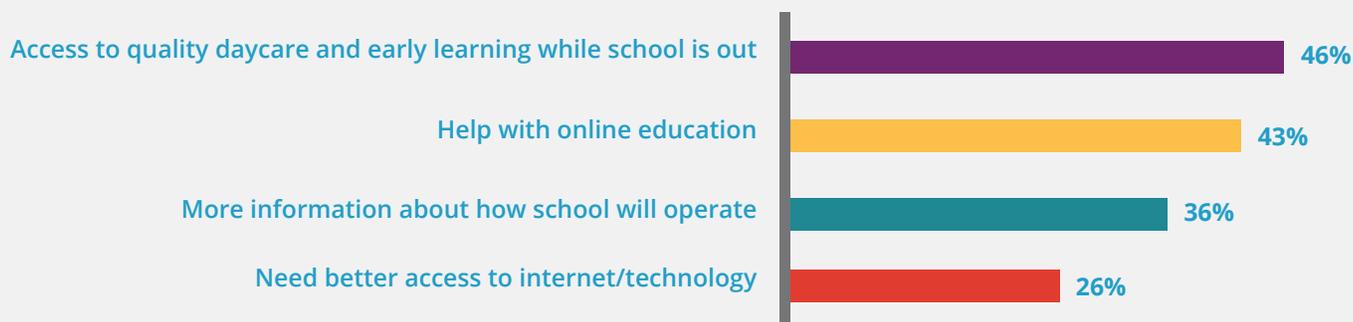
- ▶ Impose a higher tax for the top income-earners and increase the federal tobacco tax to fund quality early childhood programs and expand small business loans for childcare providers.

### Proven successes:

- ▶ Imposing higher taxes for the top income-earners within a state has been identified as a solid means of generating funding for early childhood programs and other public investments and has been implemented in a growing number of states.<sup>23</sup>
- ▶ Renewing former president Obama's proposal to increase tobacco taxes would raise nearly \$80 billion over 10 years for early childhood education.<sup>24</sup>

### Most Important Issues Latino Parents Say Government Should Address

*Latino Parent Voices: National Survey >>*



<sup>22</sup> [Center for the Study of Child Care Employment](#)

<sup>23</sup> [Center on Budget and Policy Priorities](#)

<sup>24</sup> [Center on Budget and Policy Priorities](#)

# Policies Supporting Economic and Family Well-Being



## Provide more emergency COVID-19 relief

Policy makers should not close out unemployment and other measures aimed at combating financial insecurity once the overall economy starts to recover, as Latinos will be slow to rebound relative to the overall population.<sup>25</sup> Currently 45% of Latino families report having less than \$1,000 in savings; 20% have less than \$100.<sup>26</sup> We must support the long-term economic prosperity needed to help the Latino community advance the national economy.

### Policy recommendations:

- ▶ Extend the \$600-per-week increase in unemployment benefits.
- ▶ Increase of EBT benefits by 15 percent to reduce food insecurity during these unprecedented times.
- ▶ Expand CARES Act to include immigrant families.
- ▶ Expand the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and Child Tax Credit to include taxpayers without social security numbers.

## Solutions Latino Parents Support for COVID-19 Relief

*Latino Parent Voices: National Survey >>*



### UNEMPLOYMENT

of parents support expanding unemployment insurance for those who are out of work because of Coronavirus



### INCOME SUPPORT

1 in 3 parents say help with wages and income is the most important issue the government should address

<sup>25</sup> [Center for Budget and Policy Priorities](#)

<sup>26</sup> [National Latino Parent Survey](#)

**INCLUDE UNDOCUMENTED FAMILIES**



of parents support allowing undocumented immigrants who pay federal income taxes to be eligible for stimulus checks



of parents support allowing all children who are U.S. citizens to be eligible for stimulus checks, regardless of their parents' immigration status

**Revise CARES Act to include immigrant families**

The CARES Act should be extended to help provide temporary relief for those covered under the current law. However, the support available in the law should be expanded to cover a much wider segment of the population. This would keep more Latino families in their homes which is key to stabilizing communities across the country.

**Policy recommendations:**

- ▶ We support the large coalition of advocacy organizations forming the [Children Thrive Action Network](#) to push the CARES Act revisions and allow for immigrant families access to federal funds.

**Proven successes:**

- ▶ We can learn from the recovery efforts that proved to be effective during the rebound of the Great Recession. This included ramped up counseling services to help families avoid eviction and foreclosures and to find resources to help them move out of vulnerability.<sup>27</sup> Refinancing is key for home-owners, and streamlining this process by offering less complex documentation and providing automated appraisals can help speed up the potential relief for refinancing.<sup>28</sup>
- ▶ California's Coronavirus Disaster Relief for Immigrants provides up to \$1,000 in one-time relief funding for families and utilizes community organizations to help distribute funding. California has extended its Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) to income tax filers without a Social Security number and New Mexico is attempting to pass this legislation.<sup>29</sup> Additional states should take these solutions into serious consideration to fill the void left if the federal government does not revise the CARES Act.

<sup>27</sup> [National Foreclosure Mitigation Counseling Program](#)

<sup>28</sup> [Urban Institute](#)

<sup>29</sup> [California Department of Social Services](#)

## Latino Parent Voices: **Ofelia's Story**



**"Essential" or Invaluable?**

### Expand training and career support

Currently, many Latinos struggle to stay on a path to higher education because of lack of resources and support.<sup>30</sup>

#### Policy recommendations:

- ▶ Increase funding for education and career training and make available in both English and Spanish, while providing high quality early learning and childcare whenever possible.
- ▶ Make these resources available outside of traditional 9 to 5 hours if possible so those already working but looking for a better job or higher skills can participate.
- ▶ Connect Latinos with support programs and centers on college campuses where the workforce training occurs. These entities have trained staff who are often bilingual and who can connect students with available resources to assist them in their higher education goals.

#### Solutions Latino Parents Support

*Latino Parent Voices: National Survey* >>

**61%**

of parents want additional support for career counseling

**67%**

of parents want additional support for education counseling

### Permanent solutions for integrating immigrant families

Full integration of immigrant families into the socio-political fabric of the United States would be the most impactful reform for an essential COVID-19 economic recovery. This includes comprehensive immigration reform, humane treatment of refugees and asylum seekers, and a permanent DREAM Act.

<sup>30</sup> [Unidos US](#)

## Policy recommendations:

- ▶ The most pressing policy issue is to immediately end the Trump Administration's zero-tolerance policy that has resulted in the inexcusable separation of children from their families. The trauma faced by these children will likely to have long-term mental health implications.
- ▶ We recommend making the DREAM Act permanent, providing access to financial assistance and student loans.
- ▶ Once and for all, pass a comprehensive immigration reform act.

## Proven successes:

- ▶ An overhaul of the antiquated U.S. immigration policies would allow immigrants to fully contribute to the country's economy and social fabric, while providing a legal path to citizenship and create a more orderly system.<sup>31</sup>
- ▶ Sixteen states provide in-state tuition to DREAMer students through legislative action, and another seven states through their state university systems.<sup>32</sup>

## Expand small business supports

Expanding small business loans and support services should be implemented now to address the short-term challenges during COVID-19, but kept in place to help insulate these businesses from economic shocks in the future.

### Policy recommendations:

- ▶ Expand the availability of Economic Injury Disaster Loans, SBA Express Bridge Loans, and SBA Debt Relief. Expand the Employee Retention Credit program and Small Business Survival Credit (SBSC) to cover costs.

### Solutions Latino Parents Support



of parents support creating a new fund for small business and self-employment loans, just for people who missed out on the first round

[Latino Parent Voices: National Survey >>](#)

### Proven successes:

- ▶ Some of the most promising interventions to help small businesses include significantly expanding the Employee Retention Credit (ERC) to help cover small businesses' payroll costs, and the introduction of a Small Business Survival Credit (SBSC) to help cover small businesses' fixed costs at times when revenue drops but these fixed costs remain constant.

<sup>31</sup> [Migration Policy Institute](#)

<sup>32</sup> [National Conference of State Legislatures](#)

# Social Justice and Police Reform



## Reduce police presence in schools

School districts across the country should respond to demands from student and parent activists who are calling for fewer police on campus and prefer alternative approaches to school safety.

- ▶ Evidence suggests that the presence of police in schools often targets and punishes students of color and students with disabilities at a higher rate.<sup>33</sup>
- ▶ The practice of police in schools often establishes a school-to-prison pipeline as the presence of law enforcement in schools shifts the focus of teaching and nurturing students to disciplining and criminalizing students.

### Policy recommendations:

- ▶ Re-allocate funding for law enforcement in schools to teacher training and mental health professionals who are experts in addressing mental health conflicts, juvenile disputes, and misbehavior in schools.

### Proven successes:

- ▶ Clayton County, Georgia developed a number of alternative procedures for addressing misbehavior where detention centers were the very last option. The program resulted in 87% less in-school fighting and a 36% decrease in disorderly conduct.<sup>34</sup>
- ▶ Florida civil rights groups worked with the state legislature to draft and pass a law that discourages arrests for fighting in school and encourages alternatives to expulsion or police referrals.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>33</sup> [ACLU](#)

<sup>34</sup> [Justice Policy Institute](#)

<sup>35</sup> [Justice Policy Institute](#)

## Enact nationwide restorative justice programs

Restorative justice approaches that connect young adults with victims of crime within the same communities have shown tremendous promise.

### Policy recommendations:

- ▶ Schools should implement Restorative Justice in Education initiatives such as peacemaking circles which can reduce the use of out-of-school suspension and risk of dropout and arrests.<sup>36</sup>

### Proven successes:

- ▶ Peacemaking Circles that are based in Native American/Indigenous approaches to justice often include family members of the accused and the victim and members of the community to try to heal the relationships of all involved and reduce recidivism.
- ▶ Restorative justice approaches in Oakland Unified School District, Glenview Elementary School, and Ypsilanti High School in California have seen drastic reductions in suspension and expulsion rates, and students say they are happier and feel safer.<sup>37</sup>
- ▶ Examples of cities such as Oakland, CA that invest in long-term community policing strategies across their entire department see an improvement of trust between residents and police.<sup>38</sup>
- ▶ In New Haven, CT, police regularly visited households in non-enforcement capacity, which promoted positive attitude change between residents and law enforcement officers.<sup>39</sup>



of families agree that Latinos face similar experiences of injustice with law enforcement

[Latino Parent Voices: National Survey >>](#)

<sup>36</sup> [Rutgers University](#)

<sup>37</sup> [Edutopia](#)

<sup>38</sup> [University of California Berkeley School of Law](#)

<sup>39</sup> [National Academy of Sciences](#)

## Latino Parent Voices: **Esperanza's Story**



**"That Could Have Been My Son"**

### **Police response reform**

Some policing practices involve violent responses to crisis situations that could be de-escalated with the help of mental health professionals rather than law enforcement representatives. One of the proven ways to reduce the risk of a harmful interaction is to dispatch mental health experts instead of officers in non-criminal instances.

#### **Policy recommendations:**

- ▶ Invest in hiring and dispatching mental health professionals to non-criminal situations where community members are experiencing a mental health crisis.

#### **Proven successes**

- ▶ Mobile Crisis Centers are based largely on replacing police officers with mental health specialists to respond to situations where having a mental health expert could reduce tensions non-violently.
- ▶ Denver Support Team Assistance Response (STAR) dispatches social workers and health professionals to crisis situations.<sup>40</sup>
- ▶ In San Francisco, CA, fewer than 5% of police calls are to respond to violent crimes. The city now diverts emergency calls to agencies outside of law enforcement.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>40</sup> [NM InDepth](#)

<sup>41</sup> [NM InDepth](#)

# Whole-Family Focus for Maximum Benefit



Successful economic, education, and social justice interventions treat families as partners in this process. Families understand best their own challenges and the capital they have to overcome them.<sup>42</sup> By treating families as equals in this process and co-creating strategies, programs can make sure to fit the goals and needs of the community. The overall approaches below are supported by families themselves and have been proven to be effective.

- ▶ Two-generation approaches simultaneously address the needs of adults and children in a family. A great example of a two-generation approach to address the economic stress of families is to partner training for workforce development for employees who have been laid-off with childcare. Many working parents will have challenges participating in workforce retraining or counseling if they do not have childcare. Two-generation approaches are proven to be more effective in ending multigenerational poverty and reducing adverse childhood experiences.
- ▶ Helping families navigate fragmented and gap-filled support systems is also effective for improving a family's ability to pull themselves from poverty. There are many examples of state and local entities leveraging resources from several federal and state support services to address challenges facing families, often using private philanthropy funds to address any gaps in these systems.<sup>43</sup>
- ▶ Invest in and partner with community-based organizations that have adopted human-centered design approaches to working with families to co-create local and national solutions that serve their needs, goals, and overall well-being. Investments should prioritize approaches that combine human-centered design with leadership development, allowing for increases in economic mobility, education growth, civic participation, and the overall sustainability of implementation efforts.

<sup>42</sup> [America Forward](#)

<sup>43</sup> [U.S. Government Accountability Office](#)

# Visit the Latino Parent Voices National Survey

To access the full policy recommendations white paper,  
please contact [apedroza@ap-od.org](mailto:apedroza@ap-od.org)

## Authors

**Gabriel R. Sanchez**, PhD is a Professor of Political Science and Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Endowed Chair in Health Policy at the University of New Mexico. He is also the Director of the UNM Center for Social Policy, and a Principal at Latino Decisions. Dr. Sanchez is a Non-resident Senior Fellow in Governance Studies at the Brookings Institute.

**Betzaira Mayorga-Calleros** is a PhD student in Political Science and a Doctoral Fellow at the Center for Social Policy at the University of New Mexico.

**Adrian Pedroza** is National Director of Strategic Partnerships at Abriendo Puertas / Opening Doors, former appointee to the President's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanics, and a W.K. Kellogg Foundation Community Leadership Network Fellow.