Statement for the Record
U.S. House Committee on Education and Labor
Full Committee Markup
“Growing Up in Fear: How the Trump Administration’s Immigration Policies Are Harming Children”

Submitted to
U.S. House Committee on Education and Labor

Submitted by
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Washington, DC 20036-4845

December 17, 2019
Introduction

UnidosUS, formerly the National Council of La Raza, is the largest national Latino civil rights and advocacy organization in the United States. For more than 50 years, we have worked to advance opportunities for Latino families to enhance their significant contributions to the social, economic and political tapestry of our great nation. In this capacity, UnidosUS and its Affiliate network of nearly 300 community-based organizations in 36 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico, work to provide education, health care, immigration, housing, workforce development, free tax preparation, and other services to millions of Latinos in the United States each year.

Throughout our history as an organization, UnidosUS has united communities and diverse groups seeking common ground through collaboration and a shared desire to make our country stronger. Our approach to immigration policy is no different and has guided our advocacy efforts on every significant immigration conversation our country has had since 1968. UnidosUS has combined original research, policy analysis, and advocacy to support commonsense policy solutions to achieve an immigration system that is fair, just, and accountable to the rule of law—indeed, an immigration system of which we can all be proud.

This statement for the record highlights the urgent need for Congress to pass legislation that protects one of the most vulnerable child populations in the country: the U.S.-born American citizen children of undocumented and temporary immigrants. Four million Latino children in the U.S. have at least one undocumented parent—or roughly 1 in 4 Hispanic children.¹

Even before taking office, then-candidate Trump exploited anti-immigrant rhetoric in his politics of division. Since 2017, the Trump administration has made a series of policy decisions that have upended the lives of millions of American families. Eighty percent of Latinos in the U.S. are American citizens;² of the remaining 20% who are not, half have legal permanent residency (green cards).³ While only a small portion of Hispanic adults lack permanent legal immigration status, the threat of punitive U.S. immigration policy invades their families’ lives and has an outsized impact on their American children. This stress spreads through entire communities and as a result, Latinos in the U.S. are bearing the brunt of the Trump administration’s politics of hate. By 2060, it’s estimated that nearly one in three Americans will be Hispanic.⁴ The Latino children of today are America’s future work force, voters, leaders, and service members. They are crucial to our national well-being, but federal anti-immigrant policies undermine their safety and stability and place the entire generation at risk.

It is past time that Congress provide these individuals, their families, and their communities, with the peace of mind and certainty that comes with a permanent legislative relief.

¹ The terms "Hispanic" and "Latino" are used interchangeably by the U.S. Census Bureau and throughout this document to refer to persons of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central and South American, Dominican, Spanish, and other Hispanic descent; they may be of any race.
A Moral and Constitutional Obligation to Protect and Educate America’s Children

Ninety-five percent of Hispanic children in the U.S. are U.S.-born citizens. Nearly half of these children have at least one parent who was born outside of the U.S.; a quarter have at least one parent who is undocumented. The Constitution clearly defines their rights, as Americans, to public K-12 education and equal protection under the law. Regardless of parental immigration status however, *including* naturalized citizens, research shows that the children of Hispanic immigrants in the U.S. experience the diffuse harms of punitive immigration policies, such as fearing U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), toxic stress, and discrimination based on falsely imputed immigration status.

Direct harms produced by anti-immigrant policies are only half the story; their indirect, or chilling, impacts can be far-reaching. The Trump administration has sought every opportunity to suppress Latino Americans through chilling: via the federal regulatory process, such as with the public charge rules; through indiscriminate, racialized immigration enforcement in the U.S. interior; and by creating a public environment in which Hispanics are falsely portrayed as villainous outsiders rather than lifelong, integral members of our community.

Education

While Hispanic education outcomes have been consistently rising over the past two decades, the stress of an anti-immigrant climate threatens to undercut these gains. Three separate studies from the University of California, Los Angeles detail growth in behavioral and emotional problems in schools with large immigrant populations due to fears associated with immigration enforcement. Teachers from primarily White schools report increasingly hostile school environments for ethnic minority students at levels unprecedented in their careers. School is already a difficult developmental stage for all children. Hispanic children in the U.S.—in addition to experiencing common childhood anxieties—also fear family separation and share collective worries with their impacted classmates.

The following statistics offer a snapshot of life at school for children in states with the largest Hispanic populations and underscore the scope and magnitude of impact of the current anti-immigrant climate on a sizeable share of America’s children.

**Texas**

- 50% of children in Texas (ages 0-17) are Hispanic. 95% of Hispanic children in Texas are U.S. citizens.
- 49% of Hispanic children in Texas (ages 0–17) have at least one foreign-born parent.
- 53% of K–12 students in Texas are Hispanic.
- 33% of Hispanic K–12 students in Texas are designated English learners (EL) despite 95% having been born in the U.S.
Table 1: Texas Attainment on the Nation’s Report Card (NAEP 2019)†

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exam</th>
<th>Percent of students with passing score or higher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-Hispanic White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th grade Math</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th grade Reading</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-year HS graduation rate</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of college-going HS graduates*</td>
<td>52%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

† Denotes high school graduates who enroll in any form of higher education within 16 months of graduation.


California

- 52% of children (ages 0-17) in California are Hispanic. 14 97% of Hispanic children in California are U.S. citizens. 15
- 58% of Hispanic children in California have at least one foreign-born parent. 16
- 55% of K–12 students in California are Hispanic. 17
- 31% of Hispanic K–12 students in California are designated English learners (EL) 18 despite 96% having been born in the U.S. 19

Table 2: California Attainment on the Nation’s Report Card (NAEP 2019)

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<tr>
<td>4th grade Reading</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-year HS graduation rate</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of college-going HS graduates*</td>
<td>70%</td>
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* Denotes high school graduates who enroll in any form of higher education within 16 months of graduation.


† The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is “the largest continuing and nationally representative assessment” of student knowledge and ability in key subjects. The congressionally mandated program is managed by the U.S. Department of Education and is commonly used by researchers to compare academic progress across states.
Florida

- 32% of children (ages 0-17) in Florida are Hispanic. 91% of Hispanic children in Florida are U.S. citizens.\textsuperscript{20}
- 49% of Hispanic children in Florida (ages 0–17) were born in the U.S. and have at least one foreign-born parent.\textsuperscript{21}
- 34% of K–12 students in Florida are Hispanic.\textsuperscript{22}
- 24% of Hispanic K–12 students in Florida are designated as English Learners (EL)\textsuperscript{23} despite nearly 90% having been born in the U.S.\textsuperscript{24}

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<td>% of college-going HS graduates*</td>
<td>71%</td>
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Illinois

- 25% of children (ages 0-17) in Illinois are Hispanic. 97% of Hispanic children in Illinois (ages 0–17) are U.S. citizens.\textsuperscript{25}
- 57% of Hispanic children in Illinois have at least one foreign-born parent.\textsuperscript{26}
- 26% of K–12 students in Illinois are Hispanic.\textsuperscript{27}
- 32% of Hispanic K–12 students in Illinois are designated English learners (EL)\textsuperscript{28} despite 96% having been born in the U.S.\textsuperscript{29}

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<td>4-year HS graduation rate (2018)</td>
<td>86%</td>
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* 4-year graduation rate applies to all English Learners in Illinois.

Arizona

- 49% of children (ages 0-17) in Arizona are Hispanic. 98% of Hispanic children in Arizona are U.S. citizens.\(^{30}\)
- 47% of Hispanic children in Arizona (ages 0–17) have at least one foreign-born parent.\(^ {31}\)
- 46% of K–12 students in Arizona are Hispanic.\(^ {32}\)
- 12% of Hispanic K–12 students in Arizona are designated English learners (EL)\(^ {33}\) despite 96% having been born in the U.S.\(^ {34}\)

Table 5: Arizona Attainment on the Nation’s Report Card (NAEP 2019)

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\(*4-year graduation rate applies to all English Learners in Arizona*


History shows that righting this ship is possible, but we have much to lose if the status quo prevails. Based on current population trends, our future as a nation hangs in the balance if we do not cultivate and promote the full health, talents, and abilities of our Hispanic children.
Endnotes


3 Migration Policy Institute analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data from the 2012–2016 pooled American Community Survey (ACS) and the 2008 Survey of Income and Program Participation, with legal status assignments using a unique MPI methodology developed in consultation with James Bachmeier of Temple University and Jennifer Van Hook of the Pennsylvania State University, Population Research Institute (unpublished tables, Migration Policy Institute, 2018).


10 Ibid.


12 Ibid


16 Ibid.


18 Ibid.


23 Ibid.
26 Ibid.
31 Ibid.