



## COMMISSION ON HISPANIC AFFAIRS COMISIÓN DE ASUNTOS HISPANOS

### EDUCATION

***Encourage the development of additional programs to address the high drop out rate of Hispanic students in our K-12 schools.***

Education is essential to the economic health, cultural diversity, civic vitality, and political well-being of Washington State and the nation. Our state education system and all local educational agencies must respond accordingly with resources, programs, and policies that address the factors that impede Hispanic students to reach and gain a meaningful education.

- Implement a grant program for school districts and community organization partnerships that focuses on drop out prevention
- Create career academics in Washington high schools
- Expand Navigation 101 to all schools with low performance
- Create an effective age-appropriate educational pathway or alternative assessment for students who at the end of their senior year are unable to pass the WASL
- Expand state support for parent and community involvement efforts within diverse communities

***All Teachers need to be prepared to teach in multicultural classrooms***

- ***Encourage bilingual college students to become teachers in Washington State.*** School districts face significant difficulties in recruiting, hiring, and retaining sufficient bilingual teachers. According to OSPI, more than 90% of teachers and administrators are Caucasian; whereas the Hispanic student population in some school districts is over 50%. Bilingual teachers are crucial in advancing the academic success of English Language Learners. CHA supports legislation that will give bilingual college and university students an incentive to become teachers while securing their commitment to work in Washington State.
- Require all current and future teachers to receive extensive information/training on how to teach in a multicultural classroom

***Address barriers faced by English Language Learners in attaining the Certificate of Academic Achievement.*** Only 12% of 10<sup>th</sup> grade English Language Learner (ELL) students meet the WASL standard in mathematics and only 35% of ELL students meet the WASL standard in reading. School districts must work to address the disparities in the WASL results and help to reduce the barriers faced by ELL students.

- Develop two initial exams for new immigrants: one to evaluate English language skills and one to assess writing and math skills
- Implement programs that coordinate curriculum, assessment, teacher training and family involvement

***Encourage post-secondary institutions to expand their admission processes to be more comprehensive.*** Since 1997, admission of Hispanic students at our state's higher education institutions has not kept up with our population growth. While the Hispanic population comprises roughly 11% of the population in Washington State, Hispanic enrollment in the University of Washington's graduate and professional programs is less than 3%. Colleges and universities are becoming less and less diverse while our state general population is becoming more diverse.

### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

***Support legislation that addresses the ability of minority and women's business enterprises to access available resources.*** Funds shall be used to create jobs and added economic opportunities thereby providing additional resources to the community economic revitalization board's program. CHA also encourages the state investment board to invest in start-up and expanding business programs and to create economic development grant programs.

- Expand the Link- Deposit program (through the allocation of additional funds)
- Develop small business assistance centers
- Allocate additional funds to the Office of Minority and Women's Business Enterprise (OMWBE) so that they can assist the small business centers

### HEALTHCARE

***Encourage the state to expand affordable and accessible healthcare coverage for all Washington State residents.*** Although Washington State increased health care access and coverage in the 90's, that progress has eroded over the last several years. Since 2002, nearly 100,000 additional people became uninsured in Washington State; 2004's estimate is over 600,000. Latinos are severely impacted and many lack insurance coverage and or equal access to health care.

***Expand Basic Health Plan***

There are roughly 100,000 uninsured children in Washington State. Many of these children are currently eligible for Medicaid; however, they are not enrolled. In addition, over 9,000 children are currently on the waiting list for the state Medicaid program for immigrant children. Expansion of this program needs to occur to cover these extremely low-income (<100% FPL) immigrant children who have no other source of coverage.

### ***Health Insurance Coverage for All Children by 2010***

The Hispanic community envisions Washington as a State in which every child is healthy and ready to learn because they have adequate health care coverage and access to timely care. Currently, 73,000 children in Washington are uninsured; that's enough to fill over 2,500 school classrooms. There are two principle ways to overcome much of this gap given that an estimated 70% of uninsured kids are eligible for existing programs:

- Make sure all children eligible for programs currently available are enrolled. Use outreach and education to make sure parents know about coverage options and how to appropriately access health care for their children;
- Expand the eligibility levels for current federally matched programs like the "State Children's Health Insurance Program" and develop a gap insurance program to allow families with higher incomes to buy coverage

***Require state agencies to provide certain public notices in languages other than English.*** Require state agencies to provide public notices regarding public health, safety, or welfare in the appropriate language of the community that is being addressed. Limited English Proficiency (LEP) households in predominant Washington LEP communities have the same right to be informed about these matters as English-speaking households. In order to be effective, notices such as; placement of sex offender housing, emergency information about water and food safety, or disaster recovery should be available to **all** people within the community.

***Provide funding for a Hispanic/Latino Health Needs Assessment.*** This will help advance the Joint Select Committee on Health Disparities Report. This is the first step towards creating a Universal Hispanic Health Care program. Currently, most needs data is based on migrant health issues rather than the broader Hispanic community.

### **FARM WORKER ISSUES**

***Encourage the continued monitoring of Cholinesterase.*** CHA encourages enhancement of the blood monitoring process for handlers of pesticides that contain the cholinesterase enzymes. Farm workers who thin crops are more likely to have detectable levels of pesticide residues in their homes than other farm workers. Their children are more likely to have detectable levels of pesticides in their urine. Farm workers who believe they have been exposed to pesticides are not likely to seek health care out of fear for retaliation, lack of trust in doctors to diagnose pesticide exposure, and the costs associated with health care.

- Require and fund air monitoring for agricultural pesticides to appropriate state agencies
- Establish timelines and a process for phasing out the extremely dangerous agricultural pesticides and the phasing in of safer methods for growing food
- Mandate and fund a study that will identify explicit policies and or programs that require implementation in order to ensure transition to alternatives. Farm workers must be given a place at the table in this study process
- Direct state agencies to adopt regulations such as "no- spray zones" that will enhance protection of workers and their children pending transition to alternatives

### ***Farm Worker Housing***

- ***Increase allocation of Housing Trust Funds for Farm worker Housing.*** Many farm workers live in substandard housing due to the lack of affordable housing
- Require state and local agencies that manage/supervise "housing conditions" of farm worker housing to form partnerships in order to streamline the enforcement of regulations thereby providing a safety net for farm workers who are victims of substandard housing

### **FEDERAL ISSUES**

#### ***Immigration***

The Commission will continue to advise our Congressional delegation on the need of a comprehensive immigration reform.

- A reform that addresses the barriers faced by all immigrants to our country, the recently-arrived, the long-term resident and those to come in the future, the farm worker, and the non-farm worker
- An immigration reform for the families of immigrants that reside within the United States and those outside the United States; and
- A reform that recognizes respect, the dignity of work and protects the immigrant worker and their families just as all other workers are protected

***Support the DREAM ACT.*** Hundreds of thousands of children are brought to the United States by parents in the hopes of achieving the American Dream. These children have no alternative/option to remedy or adjust their immigration status and become contributing members of society. For those triumphant immigrant students who graduate from high school and seek higher education to pursue a career, the federal DREAM ACT provides the avenue for achieving this goal as well as adjusting their immigration status. CHA recommends that legislators support this important federal legislation.