Latino Youth Service Provider Collective

September 18, 2012

Jack Catrone, Director
ICJIA
300 W. Adams, Suite 200
Chicago, IL 60606

Dear Director Catrone,

As leaders and service providers of Latino Youth in Cook County, we sincerely appreciate your hard work and dedication to find effective strategies to sustain the NRI programs throughout Illinois. We recognize that ICJIA did not request this responsibility and that you and your agency are facing a significant challenge and some very difficult decisions. Finally, we recognize that there is a need to make these decisions promptly so that there is a continuation of funding at the expiration of our current contracts on October 31st, 2012.

We want to take this opportunity to bring some critical information to your attention in the hope that it will influence the current decision making process. The Latino youth service providers that are a part of this collective, include: Southwest Youth Collaborative, Corazon Community Services, Enlace Chicago, Brighton Park Neighborhood Council, Youth Service Project, Alliance of Local Service Organization, Universidad Popular, Albany Park Community Center, Latino Organization of the Southwest, and Chicago Commons. Our organizations serve youth that live in the northwest, west, and southwest Chicago and Cook County. Our communities comprise the largest concentrations of youth in the city and county and have seen the largest increase in populations since the year 2000. Additionally, according the Chicago Department of Family and Support Services, our communities have some of the highest density of disconnected youth in Chicago (attachment). Disconnected youth is defined as youth ages 16 and 24 who are not in school or in the workforce. Studies show that these youth are the most at risk of being a victim or perpetrator of violence. Although the attachment does not include younger youth, we also consider youth ages 14-15 to be at risk as well.

The current proposal for allocation of NRI funds does not address the concerns our agencies have for disconnected youth, or youth on the verge of becoming disconnected. Additionally, it is clear that the allocation plan, as presented on September 14th, would eliminate all violence prevention programs in our communities effective November 1st. The NRI components that would be sustained in our communities (Mentoring + Jobs, PLAN) would not go into effect until May of 2013. **If put into place, this plan would leave our Latino youth without violence prevention services for six months.** At a time of record violence in our communities, this cessation of services is totally unacceptable.

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Therefore we propose that ICJIA immediately include the following recommendations to ensure that the needs of Latino youth are being met:

- Implement intervention and prevention services for disconnected youth to address violence in trauma exposed communities—These services should include targeted counseling and case management. We believe that there are many effective evidenced-based models for counseling and case management services that would work to prevent and reduce violence in our communities. All of our agencies are poised to implement these services in our communities by November 1st.
- Ensure that final allocation of funding is responsive to ongoing concerns regarding equity for Latino communities, especially given the elimination of other major state violence prevention programming.
- No consolidation of geographically dense communities—These limited resources should be sustained in communities that are already serving the largest populations of youth.
- Work more proactively to include undocumented individuals into the broad spectrum of programs—in the foreseeable future, undocumented parents living in our communities will have no access to these valuable resources.

We thank you for your time and consideration of these requests. The timeline for decision-making for NRI dollars dictates that we urgently discuss these recommendations with you. Someone from our group will follow up with a phone call shortly.

Sincerely,
Latino Youth Service Provider Collective

cc : Representative Luis Arroyo
Representative Greg Harris
Congressman Luis Gutierrez
Governor Pat Quinn
Dr. Toni Irving
Ms. Denise Martinez

attachment: Disconnected Youth in the City of Chicago