

AN ACT concerning Latino families.

**Be it enacted by the People of the State of Illinois,
represented in the General Assembly:**

Section 1. Short title. This Act may be cited as the Illinois Latino Family Commission Act.

Section 5. Legislative Findings. It is the policy of this State to promote family preservation and to strengthen families.

Latinos are well represented among the families of Illinois. The Illinois Latino population is the fifth largest in the nation. Over 14% of the estimated 12,000,000 people that live in Illinois are Latinos. According to the 2000 Census figures, more than 1,750,000 Latinos make Illinois their home. This figure represents a 69.2% increase from the 1990 Census figures compared to about 3.5% for non-Latinos. The Latino population explosion accounted for two-thirds of the total population change in Illinois and it is visible throughout the State.

In Cook County alone, the Latino population has increased to about 1,071,740. In the 6 county region including Cook County, nearly 69% of new residents were Hispanic. Roughly 23.7% of Kane County residents are Latino. In Lake County, Latinos make up 14.4% of the total county population.

Latinos are not only the fastest growing ethnic group in the State, they are also the youngest. The median age for Latinos in Illinois is 25, compared to 36 for non-Latinos. Despite unprecedented population growth, Latinos lag behind in major indicators of well-being relative to education, health, employment, and child welfare, as well as representation throughout the State. Moreover, Latino children and families present unique linguistic, cultural, and immigration issues for the State.

Latinos have a well-established presence in the child welfare system. Of the total 86,973 children that were reported abused or neglected in Fiscal Year 2001, about 8,442 or 9.7% were Hispanic children. About 25% of these hotline reports were indicated, for a total of 2,155 Latino children in Fiscal Year 2001. As of August 2003, there were about 1,367 open Latino child abuse cases in Illinois. This figure is only slightly lower than the 1,491 open Latino child cases reported for the previous fiscal year. Hispanic cases make up about 6% of all open child cases (excluding adoption assistance and home of parent living arrangement). Latino families receiving services make up about 16% of all intact family cases. It is estimated that between 60% and 80% of all Latino families involved with the Illinois Department of Child and Family Services (IDCFS) will need bilingual services at some point during the time their case is open. However, IDCFS struggles to meet the demand for bilingual services. There are similar examples throughout

the State demonstrating that Illinois lacks a unified and comprehensive strategy for addressing the unique needs of Latino families.

Latino families remain outside of the margins of opportunities in the State. There are tremendous challenges faced by Latino families and children in the State. Clearly, the growing Latino presence demands that government, child and family advocates, and other key stakeholders come together to identify and implement policy strategies that can create an infrastructure of support for Latino families in the State. Building this needed infrastructure of policies must involve multiple State agencies. The Illinois Latino Family Commission shall lead the effort, advising the Governor and assisting State agencies with this task.

Section 10. Established. The Illinois Latino Family Commission is established.

Section 15. Purpose and objectives.

(a) The purpose of the Illinois Latino Family Commission is to advise the Governor and General Assembly, as well as work directly with State agencies to improve and expand existing policies, services, programs, and opportunities for Latino families. Subject to appropriation, the Illinois Latino Family Commission shall guide the efforts of and collaborate with State agencies, including: the Department on Aging, the

Department of Children and Family Services, the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, the Department of Corrections, the Department of Human Services, the Department of Public Aid, the Department of Public Health, the Department of Transportation, the Department of Employment Security, and others. This shall be achieved primarily by:

(1) monitoring and commenting on existing and proposed legislation and programs designed to address the needs of Latinos in Illinois;

(2) assisting State agencies in developing programs, services, public policies, and research strategies that will expand and enhance the social and economic well-being of Latino children and families;

(3) facilitating the participation and representation of Latinos in the development, implementation, and planning of policies, programs, and services; and

(4) promoting research efforts to document the impact of policies and programs on Latino families.

The work of the Illinois Latino Family Commission shall include the use of existing reports, research, and planning efforts, procedures, and programs.

Section 20. Appointment; terms. The Illinois Latino Family Commission shall be comprised of 15 members. The Governor, the President of the Senate, the Minority Leader of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the Minority

Leader of the House of Representatives shall each appoint 3 members to the Commission. Each member shall have working knowledge of human services, community development, and economic public policies in Illinois. The Governor shall appoint the chairperson or chairpersons.

The members shall reflect regional representation to ensure that the needs of Latino families and children throughout the State are met. The members shall be selected from a variety of disciplines. They shall represent a partnership and collaborative effort between public and private agencies, the business sector, and community-based human services organizations.

Members shall serve 3-year terms, except in the case of initial appointments. Five members, as determined by lot, shall be appointed to one-year terms; 5 members shall be appointed to 2-year terms; and 5 members shall be appointed to 3-year terms, so that the terms are staggered. Members shall serve without compensation, but shall be reimbursed for Commission-related expenses.

The Department on Aging, the Department of Children and Family Services, the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, the Department of Corrections, the Department of Employment Security, the Department of Human Services, the Department of Public Aid, the Department of Public Health, and the Department of Transportation shall each appoint a liaison to serve ex-officio on the Commission. The Office of the

Governor, in cooperation with the State agencies appointing liaisons to the Commission under this paragraph, shall provide administrative support to the Commission.

Section 25. Funding. The Illinois Latino Family Commission may receive funding through specific appropriations available for its purposes made to the Department on Aging, the Department of Children and Family Services, the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, the Department of Corrections, the Department of Human Services, the Department of Public Aid, the Department of Public Health, and the Department of Transportation. The funding allocation for the Commission shall be no less than \$500,000.

Section 30. Reporting. The Illinois Latino Family Commission shall annually report to the Governor and the General Assembly on the Commission's progress towards its goals and objectives.

Section 99. Effective date. This Act takes effect upon becoming law.