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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Housing Study Released

Latino Policy Organization Releases First Study on Latinos and Overcrowded Housing in Chicago Suburbs

Report finds that economic and cultural factors contribute to housing overcrowding within Latino communities

Chicago- A housing study *Bajo el Mismo Techo (Under the Same Roof) The Latino Community in Suburban Chicago: An analysis of overcrowded Chicago*, finds that low wages prevalent among Latino families within the suburbs forces many Latino families to double up within dwellings in order to simply afford housing. The increasing cost of housing combined with the overrepresentation of Latinos in the lowest wage brackets leads to overcrowded conditions for Latino families. The study also finds that the extended family structure prevalent within Latino culture often results in larger households living under the same roof. The study also identifies that housing code enforcement is the only strategy used by municipalities to curb overcrowding, yet this has been found to be ineffective. Many study participants indicated that they were not aware of housing regulations in their communities. This problem therefore is also related to the lack of community outreach and education.

The high cost of housing is in stark contrast to the low wages earned by many Latinos in the suburbs. Considering that one out of five Latinos can be considered "working poor," it should not come as a surprise that it will be difficult for Latino families to afford housing. The study finds that in nine of Chicago's suburban communities with large Latino populations, the number of overcrowded housing units leapt by an average of 133 percent between 1990 and 2000. Furthermore, the report found that 75% of housing units classified as overcrowded were occupied by Latinos. The nine municipalities considered are Addison, Aurora, Berwyn, Blue Island, Carpentersville, Cicero, Elgin, Joliet, and Waukegan. "The increase of housing overcrowding among Latinos in the suburbs is an issue of housing affordability. More people are finding it increasingly difficult to afford living in the areas they work," said Paul Roldan, Executive Director of the Hispanic Housing Development Corporation.

There is a higher tolerance for household density among Latino families than typical within nuclear household settings. Although a tight knit family is generally seen in a positive light, Latinos in certain communities are criticized for wanting, and often needing, to live with extended family as an economic necessity. According to Maricela Garcia, Executive Director of Latinos United, "The region needs to come up with new housing design in order to accommodate the requirements of extended family households in Latino communities. The intergenerational composition of Latino families is a strength of the community and should be supported, not penalized."

The report identifies policy recommendations to address this issue that includes increasing funding for affordable housing, housing design to meet the needs of Latino extended families, strategies to reach out and educate Latinos about housing rules and regulations, and the development of neighbor dispute mediation services.

The report *Bajo el Mismo Techo (Under the Same Roof)*, will be released at an event on Tuesday, March 25th from 9:00-11:30 AM at Sonnenschein Nath & Rosenthal LLP, 7800 Sears Tower 233 South Wacker Drive, Chicago, Illinois 60606.

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The purpose of Latinos United is to improve the quality of life for the Latino community by removing obstacles to opportunities and highlighting the contributions made by Latinos to the region and state.