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Latino advocates call on Illinois leaders to find common ground

Chicago—July 15, 2015—Illinois is two weeks into the new fiscal year and with Springfield still at a budget impasse, the Latino Policy Forum and other members of the Illinois Latino Agenda gathered Wednesday to urge Illinois leaders to [choose revenue](#) and adopt a fair, adequate and fully funded budget.

“We are here to remind Springfield that *people*, not ideals, are at the heart of the work we do, and that this budget crisis is in reality more of a *priorities* crisis,” said Erie Neighborhood House Executive Director Celena Roldan-Moreno at a press conference held at Erie, a 145-year-old settlement house agency.

The opportunity cost of inaction is being borne by Latinos, immigrants and vulnerable residents in every corner of the state who rely on state-funded programs for support, employment and community stabilization. Advocates called on Illinois elected leadership to find the common ground necessary to adopt a budget funded with adequate, sustainable and progressive forms of revenue. Failure to do so will lead to the systematic dismantling of the state’s Latino-led nonprofit infrastructure.

“Illinois economy is worse off every day there isn’t a budget in place because real people are losing their jobs,” said Latino Policy Forum Executive Director Sylvia Puente. “It is shameful that nonprofit public servants, working mothers and other vulnerable residents are paying the price for Springfield’s failure.”

Nonprofit service providers, affected individuals and families shared compelling stories, illustrating how the state budget impasse is causing job loss and economic instability for families in Latino communities. Rosalinda Espinosa of Gads Hill Center, for example, explained how the budget impasse is ripping apart one of the state’s most important work supports—the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP). Under rules filed by the current administration, eligibility is now restricted to families making 50 percent of the federal poverty level, or no more than \$10,045 a year for a family three. Nine out of 10 people currently participating in CCAP would no longer qualify, “A single mother with two children earning the new \$10 minimum wage in Chicago is already ineligible for the program if she works more than 20 hours per week. At Gads Hill Center, we may have to deny child care to 70 families across Head Start and school-age programs. It is heartbreaking and wrong.”

Latinos are a vital, growing segment of the state’s tax base, consumer market and workforce. Recent data indicates that Illinois Latinos pay more than \$3.2 billion in state and local taxes, wield more than \$47 billion in purchasing power, and own more than 70,000 businesses. While they contribute a tremendous amount to the Illinois economy, there are more than 430,000 Latinos living in poverty and thousands more who are low-income and struggling to survive. The state has a responsibility to foster wellness, stability and opportunities for them to improve their earning potential and quality of life.

51 organizations signed on to [a letter](#) urging Governor Rauner, Speaker Madigan, President Cullerton, Leader Durkin and Leader Radogno to take action Wednesday. The letter can be read at www.latinopolicyforum.org

About the Illinois Latino Agenda

The Illinois Latino Agenda, the largest coalition of Latino-led nonprofits in Illinois, is committed to securing equitable resources and investment for Latinos while building their power, influence, and leadership through a strategic alliance of Latino nonprofits and allies in the state. With nearly 50 member organizations across the Chicago

metropolitan region, the Illinois Latino Agenda reaches over 250,000 individuals, families, and business owners each year through direct assistance and indirect services in a range of areas, including health care, family services and education.

About the Latino Policy Forum: The Latino Policy Forum is the only organization in the Chicago area that facilitates the involvement of Latinos at all levels of public decision-making. The Forum conducts analysis to inform, influence and lead. Its goals are to improve education outcomes, advocate for affordable housing, promote just immigration policies, and engage diverse sectors of the community, with an understanding that advancing Latinos advances a shared future. For more information, visit www.latinopolicyforum.org.

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