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Chicago's Latino Community stands with the LGBTQ Latino Community

CHICAGO – June 16, 2016 – This weekend, the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) community was attacked in Orlando, Florida in what is considered to be the worst mass shooting in U.S. history. The shooting occurred at Pulse, a nightclub for the LGBTQ community, during its weekly “Latin” night. Forty-nine individuals died, and an additional 53 were injured. The majority of those victims are LGBTQ Latinos – they were our children, our brothers and sisters, our family. We send our condolences to the families and loved ones of those whose life was cut short during this senseless act.

Even though this weekend’s violent shooting was perhaps the most devastating, it was not an isolated event—violence towards the LGBTQ community is rampant. LGBTQ people are twice as likely to be victims of hate crimes, compared to other marginalized communities. For LGBTQ Latinos who experience racism, homophobia, and transphobia, the violence is far too common. A national report conducted by the Human Rights Campaign and League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) found that LGBTQ Latino youth are three times more likely to face harassment and violence than are their non-LGBTQ Latino peers—in their communities, in *our* communities. The violence directed at members of our community is something we can no longer ignore.

In light of the shooting in Orlando, we must come together, not only to help the LGBTQ Latino community heal, but also to act. Now more than ever, we must commit ourselves to eradicating homophobia and transphobia in our Latino communities. While there has been much progress for the LGBTQ community, such as marriage equality, we must continue to work to ensure that all LGBTQ people are able to live without fear of losing their lives due to intolerance and hate. We need to challenge the anti-LGBTQ sentiments from within our own families and communities. We must remember that LGBTQ Latinos are part of our entire community, and that their love is just as important.

It is also imperative that our laws reflect our values to ensure we build safe communities for everyone. We must hold our elected officials and leaders accountable, rejecting hateful rhetoric that seeks to divide and cause harm. We must pressure them to work on policy that will ensure complete equality and fair treatment for the LGBTQ community as well as legislation that will put an end to this senseless gun violence. We must also be willing to stand in solidarity with other marginalized communities, we cannot allow this tragedy to perpetuate Islamophobia. Now more than ever we need to work and move forward in unison.

The Latino communities in Chicago, and our allies, stand with the Latino and LGBTQ communities in Orlando. We send our sympathy to the LGBTQ Latino community across the country that continues to mourn and begins to heal. We will stand with the LGBTQ community to end homophobia and transphobia once and for all.

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