

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Thursday, May 28th, 2020

CONTACT:

Xavier Nogueras 773-593-1345 - info@bocamediagroup.com



IllinoisUnidos.com

Illinois Latino COVID-19 Initiative

Cesar Rolon 773-251-3329 -
crolon@imagenconsultants.com

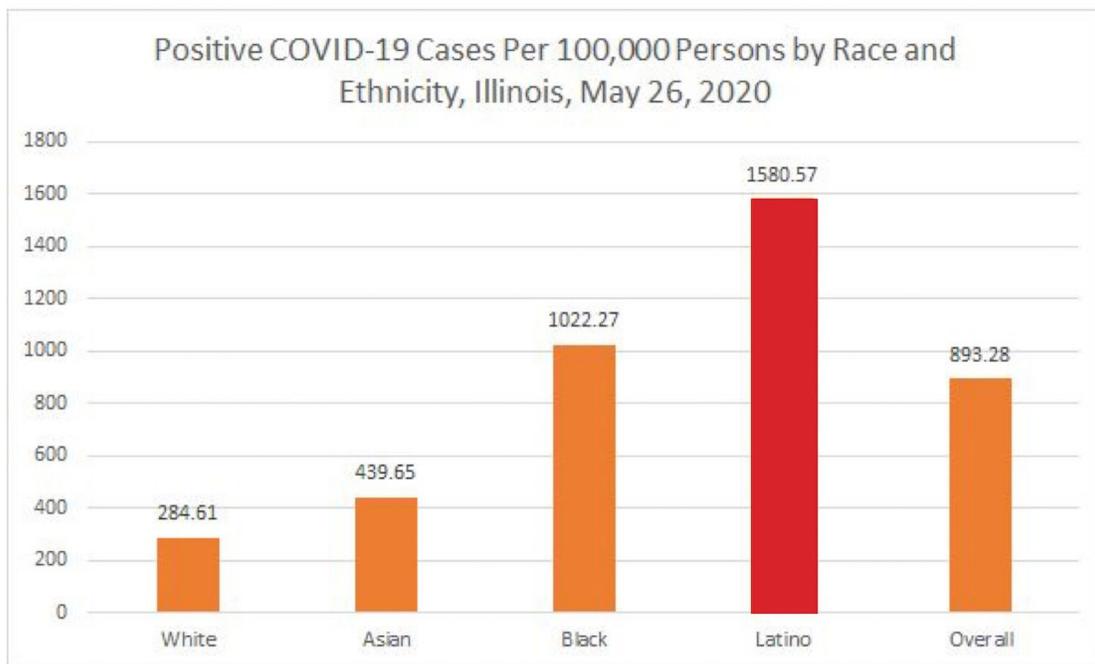
The Illinois Latino COVID-19 Initiative urges stronger health response to protect communities of color as restrictions loosen and COVID impact remains imbalanced

The Illinois Latino COVID-19 Initiative, a coalition of over 50 Illinois Elected Officials, Stakeholders and Health professionals call on government, philanthropy, and all other institutions of power to more proactively protect these communities and their state.

Chicago, IL – As Illinois prepares to move into Phase 3 of its reopening plan, too many glaring health and economic disparities remain unaddressed for the state’s communities of color. The Illinois Latino COVID-19 Initiative calls on government, philanthropy, and all other institutions of power to more proactively protect these communities and their state.

Although Illinois as a whole has flattened the curve of COVID-19, the Latino community continues to have alarmingly high infection rates and case-positivity rates. These disparities in positivity rates are not simply due to an increase in COVID-19 testing. As of Tuesday, May 26, about **1.6 percent of all Latinos** (possibly higher due to 52% of missing data statewide) in Illinois have been infected with COVID-19, which is a dramatically higher rate than those of the state overall (0.9 percent) and of its white non-Hispanic population (0.3 percent). Latinos comprise about 17% of the state’s population, but about 30% of all COVID-19 cases in the state (higher when including undercount). While Chicago continues to see alarming rates, outside of Chicago, Latino cases are also disproportionality high.

The disproportionate and tragic burden in Latino communities proves that COVID-19 is not an equal threat to all Illinoisans. These gaps are not narrowing and are not going to reconcile themselves. In the past 7 days, 35 percent of all new reported COVID-19 cases in Illinois were Latinos. In reality, this may be as high as 50 percent when considering the number of Latinos in the “Left Blank” category.



While the state and region as a whole have achieved the milestone of less than a 20-percent case-positivity rate defined as necessary for progression into Phase 3, many pockets remain at over double this rate. Latinos are still testing at 48-percent positivity overall. That number is likely to be an undercount considering that many who are tested are not disclosing or not being asked for their race and ethnicity. Additionally, out of the 15 Illinois zip codes with the most cases, 11 have Latino-majority populations. These communities will now be even more exposed under the loosened restrictions of Phase 3.

**COVID-19 Attack in Illinois
Ranked By Cases, As of May 26 2020
Top 15 Zip Codes
Positive Cases, Testing, and Deaths¹**

Rank	Zip Code Area		Positive Cases			Testing			Deaths			Population 2018 (e)			
			Total Cases	Rate per 1k Pop.	Rate Level ²	Total Tests	Rate per 1k Pop.	Rate Level ²	Total Deaths	Rate per 10k Pop.	Rate Level ²	Total Pop.	Latino Pop.	Latino %	Latino % Level
1	60623	Chicago - South Lawndale	2,903	33.76	High	7,888	91.74	Medium	107	12.4	High	85,979	56,864	66.1	Majority
2	60639	Chicago - Belmont Cragin, Hermosa, Austin,	2,902	32.06	High	9,087	100.39	High	71	7.8	Medium	90,517	70,538	77.9	Majority
3	60629	Chicago-Chicago Lawn, West Lawn, Gage Park	2,803	25.06	High	9,264	82.83	Medium	66	5.9	Medium	111,850	79,432	71.0	Majority
4	60632	Chicago - Brighton Park, Gage Park, Arche	2,705	29.71	High	7,561	83.05	Medium	59	6.5	Medium	91,039	76,434	84.0	Majority
5	60804	Cicero (Cook County)	2,524	30.36	High	8,245	99.16	High	56	6.7	Medium	83,147	74,180	89.2	Majority
6	60085	Waukegan (Lake County)	2,150	30.35	High	6,249	88.20	Medium	na ¹ 4	na ¹	na ¹	70,850	43,651	61.6	Majority
7	60505	Aurora (Kane County)	1,650	21.38	High	5,656	73.27	Medium	na ¹ 1	na ¹	na ¹	77,190	58,413	75.7	Majority
8	60609	Chicago-New City, Mckinley Park, Bridgepor	1,542	25.08	High	5,335	86.76	Medium	58	9.4	High	61,495	32,860	53.4	Majority
9	60651	Chicago - Humbolt Park, Austin	1,500	23.73	High	5,566	88.04	Medium	57	9.0	Medium	63,218	26,860	42.5	Plurality
10	60608	Chicago- Pilsen (Lower West Side), South L	1,499	18.93	High	5,844	73.78	Medium	38	4.8	Medium	79,205	40,146	50.7	Majority
11	60634	Chicago- Dunning,Portage Park, Belmont Cra	1,291	16.99	Medium	7,076	93.11	High	27	3.6	Medium	75,995	29,065	38.2	Plurality
12	60641	Chicago- Portage Park, Irving Park, Belmon	1,286	18.11	Medium	5,447	76.69	Medium	42	5.9	Medium	71,023	38,350	54.0	Majority
13	60625	Chicago-Albany Park, Lincoln Square, other	1,210	15.27	Medium	4,967	62.68	Medium	79	10.0	High	79,243	25,978	32.8	Plurality
14	60402	Berwyn (Cook County)	1,208	19.01	High	5,403	85.01	Medium	35	5.5	Medium	63,554	39,477	62.1	Majority
15	60647	Chicago- Logan Square, Humboldt Park, West	1,186	13.55	Medium	5,336	60.98	Low	62	7.1	Medium	87,509	39,226	44.8	Plurality
Top 15 Impacted Zip Codes			28,359	23.79	High	98,924	83.00	Medium	762	6.4	Medium	1,191,814	731,474	61.4	Majority

By Orestes Aguillon, Latin American Matrix, May 26 2020.

Sources: IDPH, COVID-19 Illinois Positive Cases, daily report, May 26 2020. -- Cook County, IL Medical Examiner Case Archive, May 26 2020 -- US Census American Community Survey, 2018-5.

¹ As of May 26 2020, Illinois Covid-19 related deaths information was publicly available, by zip codes, only for Cook County. na: This information included a few cases where the death event was registered in Cook County but the deceased resided elsewhere. In these situations, the information regarding deaths here published for those zip codes must be considered incomplete.

² Derived via quantiles in Chicago's Covid-19 incidence data. The rate level classifications for zip codes are relative and subject to change as new cases are added.

Aside from the health risks, these disparities come with economic repercussions that affect residents outside of their communities.

Nearly 70% of all COVID-19 cases in Illinois are to working-age individuals 20-59, one third of these are Latino, while Latinos are 17% of the state's population. Because Latinos have the highest labor-force participation rate in the state (and among the lowest health-insurance enrollment rates), these disparities will lead to widespread negative economic repercussions outside of the Latino communities.

“Despite all efforts to date, the public health crisis of COVID-19 in the Latino community remains the most severe in the state. As many essential workers are literally sanitizing and conducting the deep cleaning necessary to protect themselves and their neighbors, what protections will be put in place for these workers?” said Aida Giachello, Ph.D., member of the initiative and research faculty at Northwestern University.

“Physical distancing is a privilege, and many Latinos have continued to work during the stay at home orders. When you live in multigenerational family living arrangements and crowded housing conditions, this increases the risk of contagion. Moreover, many Latinos are without health insurance and may delay testing and medical care when they need it. With this in mind, it is imperative that we put in place additional protections in order to limit the spread of the virus and its impact on the health of Latino communities,” said Dr. Marina Del Rios, an emergency physician and member of the initiative.

“As Illinois takes steps to reopen, communities in my district remain the hardest hit. Latinos have suffered disproportionately, but continue to serve on the frontlines, and as a result, workers expose themselves and their families every day. The fight against this pandemic is far from over and unless immediate action is taken at all levels of government to mitigate the harm, we will see more lives lost. The bottom line is that the needs of Latinos and essential workers must be prioritized in the state’s reopening.” said Congressman Jesús “Chuy” García.

“This public health crisis has been exacerbated by an economic tsunami effect that has crashed through the Latino community,” said Sylvia Puente, Executive Director for the Latino Policy Forum. “These are among the most powerful economic contributors in the state. Devastation for Latinos means devastation for Illinois.”

We need to be proactive and creative if we are to reconcile the social and health equities that communities of color have exposed. The Initiative has identified the following urgent steps and calls on all Illinois leaders to take action.

1. Collect accurate, complete surveillance data by race and ethnicity. Latinos are not being properly categorized with respect to COVID-19 testing, morbidity, and mortality. We need to reduce the missing demographic data and consistently obtain the ethnic breakdown of Latino and other racial and ethnic groups by national origin, census tracts, community type (urban or rural), age and gender, etc. We call on the Governor to issue an *executive order* assuring that all sectors responsible for data collection record accurate demographic data including race, ethnicity, sex, and

gender and to mandate training, as needed, to accurately and rigorously maintain testing, morbidity, and mortality records.

2. Increase the number of testing sites and assure that all testing sites have robust capacity and infrastructure including the necessary staffing, supplies, and funding for testing, counseling, and follow-up in areas with a high concentration of Latinos.

3. Testing sites should not deter non-citizens by imposing barriers within communities where people who are uninsured or undocumented live. Testing sites should refrain from asking about citizenship status, should expand opportunities for testing without an appointment or without a healthcare provider's referral, and should ensure that residents are aware of State programs that address the cost of testing and treatment for COVID-19. Testing sites should also triage people presenting for testing and refer for immediate medical attention where appropriate.

4. All levels of government should have a plan to provide adequate case-finding, contact-tracing, and follow-up with culturally and linguistically appropriate approaches. This plan should be done in part by leveraging the resources of community-based organizations.

5. Provide Latinos who test positive with a COVID-19 home care kit of items to monitor disease severity. This may include a thermometer, pulse oximeter, bilingual English and Spanish educational materials about how to protect themselves and other family members, and strict precautions for when to seek immediate emergency care and when it is okay to stay home.

6. Provide temporary housing to Latino essential workers who have tested positive and cannot maintain social distancing at home. This information should also be on the access helpline in Spanish.

7. Engage in a comprehensive English and Spanish health education campaign that will use ethnic and mainstream media, including social media platforms, and utilize professional bilingual and bicultural personnel to translate and regularly update COVID-19 educational messages and materials.

8. Develop administrative policies to protect vulnerable populations including people with disabilities, nursing home residents, immigrants, and undocumented workers, among others. Ensure that federal, state, county, and city COVID-19 services are available to them, including protections and inclusion of these groups in federal stimulus relief efforts.

9. Enforce occupational, safety, and health guidelines in small businesses in Latino communities, meatpacking industries, and other industries with high concentrations of people of color.

10. Release and distribute COVID-19 financial resources across various communities equitably and transparently.

The Latino COVID-19 Initiative is a consortium of over [50 Latino elected and appointed officials, together with health professionals, and representatives of professionals and community-based organizations](#). The initiative aims to present one united voice in stopping the spread of COVID-19 in our communities while addressing related public health issues and the devastating economic impact of COVID-19.

*The Initiative as a group has continued to expand and has established a bilingual (Spanish) website **IllinoisUnidos.com** to share our work and COVID-19 related resources with the public, particularly, the Latinx community.*

Please contact Xavier Nogueras @ 773-593-1345 or Cesar Rolon @ 773-251-3329 for more information or to interview participants including Health Experts / Elected Officials / Community Stakeholders.