



Governor's Advisory Council on Hispanic Affairs
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Good afternoon Chairman Carper and distinguished members of the Senate subcommittee on Federal Financial Management, Government Information, Federal Services and International Security responsible for overseeing the census. I would also like to acknowledge the Honorable James Baker and the other participants here today. I appreciate the opportunity to testify on behalf of Delaware's Governor's Advisory Council on Hispanic Affairs (GACHA) and share recommendations from council and community members.

"We as a nation have always been, and will always remain greater than the sum of our parts. But we, as a people must know the amount and sum of these parts; who and where we are. In this way we move forward together, as a united nation of many. In this way, the founders wisely decided the decennial enumeration be done". (Margaret Reyes-GACHA member)

It is in this spirit, with this in mind that I am here before you today. Good afternoon, my name is Wanda Lopez, and I have served as the Executive Director of GACHA since 2003. The council has existed for 31 years and our members make recommendations to the state as they relate to our five active committees, Education, Health, Social Justice, Economic Development and Historical & Cultural Affairs. For the last 3 years, I have had the opportunity to meet with other state Hispanic/Latino affairs directors during the United States Hispanic Leadership Institute (USHLI) annual conference. At the invitation of Dr Juan Andrade, USHLI president, these meetings created a venue to share best practices around policy and organizational development. This year we formed the United States Council on Latino Affairs and elected officers. Our latest gathering was an education summit in April (Washington, DC), attended by 23 Hispanic State Affairs directors who committed to making the census our national project.

GACHA began to partner with the Census Bureau last year and formally announced the partnership during our Hispanic Heritage Month Proclamation on September 15, 2008; former Delaware Governor Minner and Fernando Armstrong, Regional Census Director, were in attendance. The commitment was to raise awareness on the importance of being counted. GACHA became a member of the Community Complete

Count Committee and launched a local campaign called “*Cuenta Conmigo*” (Count on Me). The goal is that through our established network of contacts we refer to the census partnership specialist various community and faith based leaders throughout the state. These connections have led to census staff meetings with local emergency service providers ensuring physical locales are properly verified and pockets in communities are properly located. Identifying these areas is the critical first step; the next critical step is to hire the right people to enumerate their own communities.

We feel confident that if partnerships are formed with these organizations statewide, the community will receive the message from “trusted messengers” and participate in the census. By creating Census store front sites within existing organizations in each county and placing census personnel in service provider locales, community and faith-based sites, they could be very effective in capturing the historically undercounted population of Hispanics. Relying on volunteers to accomplish this task would be a mistake as too many non-profits are understaffed and underfunded.

In order to garner the trust of these sensitive populations it is imperative that test score alone not be sole criteria for the selection of the census workforce of these areas. We highly recommend that additional criteria like language ability, cultural sensitivity, knowledge of community and experience from living and working within hard-to-count areas be the final determining factor for hires.

The Hispanic population must receive messages from trusted sources like church leaders, service providers and local Spanish media in order to fully grasp the importance of the census data. We here today all understand the importance of the census data and how it relates to apportionment of seats in the House of Representatives, the redrawing of congressional and state legislative boundaries, and the allocation of billions of dollars in federal funds to state and local governments. The general population as a whole and the Hispanic population specifically need to understand how that impacts their daily lives and why their participation is critical for their future. Those messages must come from trusted and familiar sources.

We all know that that Agribusiness relies heavily on the undocumented workforce population that lives in rural areas. These are traditionally hard to count areas and therefore historically undercounted communities. A census presence within the corporations that employ them and partnerships with service providers in their community will be instrumental to count these groups. Stepped up immigration raids and hate crimes focusing on immigrant workers has driven this community further underground making this tumultuous task more challenging. The Census Bureau now has the unenviable task of having less than one year to undo the erosion of trust resulting from immigration policies of the previous administration focused on workers not

employers. This community has difficulty in understanding the difference between the mission of the U.S. Census Bureau and the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), two separate branches of government. It is for this reason that the only solution to a successful count is to work with people they trust within their communities. We also hope to see cooperation from other agencies to support the Census Bureau in dealing with this sensitive population.

The absolute key is working with trusted faces in the community where they **learn, work, play, and pray**. Working with the Department of Education to incorporate the census into the curriculum [k-12, adult ESL education (accomplished in Delaware)], working with employers to hold census awareness sessions on site, working with service providers to assist with questionnaires, working with soccer league coordinators to carry the message on the field, and working with the media and faith based leaders to incorporate the message within their programs will ultimately ensure that these folks are captured in their community during the course of their daily lives.

Although Delaware is a small state we are capable of producing great results as evidenced recently in the national political scene (Vice President Biden) as well as here today (Senator Carper). Delaware is capable of being a model state for the census since we are manageable in regards to size and open to new ideas. GACHA feels confident that Census2010 can be more successful in capturing the Hispanic undercounted population than in prior years if community partnerships are formed statewide, bilingual bicultural personnel hired for key positions, and Spanish speaking census personnel placed in critical areas. We have seen that work has already begun in Delaware.

Thank you for allowing me to address the committee and share Delaware's GACHA council members and community leader's recommendations for a complete count in Census2010.



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