



**INDIANA
LATINO
INSTITUTE**



Legislative Agenda

2018



LEGISLATIVE
AGENDA

2018

LETTER FROM THE
President and CEO

The Indiana Latino Institute (ILI) has been committed to serving Latinos and working to address issues of importance within our Latino communities since its inception in 2001. We work daily to fulfill our mission to improve health and advance education for the Indiana Latino community through statewide advocacy, research, and culturally responsive programs.

Statewide, our community consists of over 425,000 individuals of Latino descent, and growth is expected to continue at a clear, consistent pace. As our population increases, it is imperative that our elected leaders recognize and address important issues that impact our Indiana Latino community.

Our *2018 Legislative Agenda* reflects priorities that are critical to improving lives for Latinos across the state. Addressing economic, education, health, immigration, and public safety issues will positively impact Indiana socially, culturally and economically. We hope that you will join us in our efforts to educate our elected leaders on these topics.

Now more than ever, our Indiana Latino community needs ILI as the distinguished, strong voice leading statewide advocacy for Hoosier Latinos. We are truly the trusted voice of our people, and we must unite and let our voices be heard.

Marlene Dotson
President & CEO
Indiana Latino Institute



LEGISLATIVE
AGENDA

2018

THE ISSUES

Economic.....

Expand Indiana’s Workforce Ready Grant

Education.....

Provide Undocumented Students with the Opportunity to Pay In-State Tuition at Public Universities

Add Minority Completion to the State’s Higher Education Performance Funding Formula

Expand Access to High Quality Pre-K Opportunities

Amend the Indiana Diploma/Graduation Pathways

Health.....

Increase Cigarette Tax

Raise the Statewide Legal Age to Purchase Tobacco Products to 21

Require School Employees to Participate in Evidence Based Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Training

Authorize Indiana State Department of Health to Designate Perinatal Levels of Care

Immigration.....

Support Comprehensive Federal Immigration Reform

Public Safety.....

Enact a Bias Crimes Statute

Allow Undocumented Immigrants to Obtain Driver’s Licenses



LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

2018

ECONOMIC

Two million Hoosiers need additional training to compete in the 21st Century workforce. Additionally, there will be over one million job openings in Indiana due to retirements and the creation of new jobs in the next decade.

EXPAND INDIANA'S WORKFORCE READY GRANT

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, almost 30 percent of Latino Hoosier adults age 25 and older have obtained a high school diploma or an equivalent education, but have not completed any education beyond high school. An additional 20 percent have completed some college or have obtained an associate's degree. These individuals could help Indiana meet its workforce needs

by participating in the Workforce Ready Grant program. This program helps working-age Hoosiers enroll tuition free in career focused programs at Ivy Tech Community College campuses or Vincennes University, if they meet certain requirements. The grant is targeted to meet the need of in-demand occupations within high-growth sectors of Indiana's economy.

ILI supports the expansion of the Workforce Ready Grant for working-age Hoosiers.





LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

2018

EDUCATION

Less than half of all Latinos that start college ever finish. Additionally, only 12.3 percent of Latino adults age 25 and older have completed a bachelor's degree or higher. Indiana can positively impact Latino student success by addressing its education policies to improve early childhood education access, amending the high school diploma pathways, improving college affordability, and addressing the disparities in college completion among minority students.

PROVIDE UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS WITH THE OPPORTUNITY TO PAY IN-STATE TUITION AT PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES

Indiana is one of five states that specifically prohibits in-state tuition rates for undocumented immigrants. Many undocumented students came to the United States with their parents as young children and Indiana invests in them throughout the K-12 system. Because many undocumented students come from low socioeconomic backgrounds, acquiring the financial resources needed to attend college is one of the major challenges in accessing higher education. The State further reduces this opportunity as well as its return on investment by imposing a policy that severely limits the future social and economic mobility of these students. This is not beneficial for Indiana or the United States.

Data released by the Indiana Department of Education shows that the 2016 Hispanic high school graduation rate (86.28 percent) is lower than that of their White (90.91 percent) and Asian (92.64 percent) peers. Research shows that states that grant in-state tuition rates to undocumented students also see higher high school graduation rates of these students.

ADD MINORITY COMPLETION TO STATE'S HIGHER EDUCATION PERFORMANCE FUNDING FORMULA

Indiana's public higher education institutions must prioritize minority completion if Indiana hopes to meet its 2025 goal of 60 percent postsecondary attainment. According to data released by the Indiana Commission for Higher Education (ICHE), an achievement gap exists between Black and Hispanic college completion rates and their White counterparts. In fact, ICHE reports that the on-time completion rate for Hispanics at four-year institutions is 29.1 percent compared to 41.6 percent for Whites. The on-time completion rate for Hispanics at two-year institutions is 6.5 percent compared to 9.5 percent for Whites. Extended-time graduation is also alarming. Extended time completion rates for Hispanics at four-year institutions is 46.8 percent compared to 68.6 percent for Whites. Extended-time completion rates at two year institutions is 26.6 percent for Hispanics compared to 32.1 percent for Whites. The numbers are even more dismal when looking at Black completion rates.

For Indiana to achieve the highly educated population it seeks, and to ensure a strong economy, we cannot allow such an educational disparity to remain unaddressed. Indiana already utilizes performance funding variables in its higher education funding formula. Adding minority completion to the state's higher education performance funding formula incentivizes Indiana's state funded colleges and universities to implement programs and services that positively impact these graduation rates.



LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

2018

EDUCATION

EXPAND ACCESS TO HIGH QUALITY PRE-K OPPORTUNITIES

There are half million Hoosier children under the age of five, and with one in four families living in poverty, the cost of quality early education remains out of reach for too many families.

A quality education is critical for young people to succeed as adults, and pre-K is the foundation of a child's education experience. According to the Annie E. Casey Foundation (2017), just 55 percent of Latino children ages 3 to 5 enrolled in pre-K education. Boosting the participation in and the quality of early childhood educational experiences could increase school readiness. Students who attend a pre-K program develop emotional, academic, and social skills they may otherwise lack when entering kindergarten. There is strong evidence that shows students who attend pre-K programs enter school more ready to learn than their peers.

Research shows that high-quality pre-K yields benefits for children, school, and communities. Not only do students achieve high reading and math scores, lower rates of grade retention and special education placement, but studies show that in the long run people who went to pre-K are less likely to be on welfare or involved in the criminal justice system and more likely to be working and paying income taxes.

AMEND THE INDIANA DIPLOMA/GRADUATION PATHWAYS

In December 2017, the Indiana State Board of Education approved new high school graduation pathways to take effect with students graduating in 2023. These new graduation pathways will require that all students fulfill high school diploma requirements, learn and demonstrate employable skills, and achieve postsecondary-ready competencies.

Under this plan, a high school diploma may be out of reach for students who struggle academically, English language learners, or students with disabilities. Indiana's general diploma would no longer be a valid diploma, meaning that about 12 percent of Hoosier high schoolers would not be considered graduates.





LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

2018

HEALTH

Indiana is consistently ranked near the bottom of all 50 states for health in the America's Health Rankings report. Hoosiers deserve healthy and productive lives, and addressing tobacco use, infant mortality, and mental health will improve Hoosier health.

INCREASE CIGARETTE TAX

Indiana's health ranking is made much worse by the Hoosier smoking rate which is 22.9 percent, much higher than the national average of 15.1 percent (CDC). Tobacco use directly impacts not just smokers, but also those exposed to secondhand smoke. Secondhand smoke exposure has been shown to develop heart disease, cancer, respiratory problems and irritation of the eyes and nasal passages. Indiana ranks 47th out of 50 states regarding secondhand smoke exposure.

Smoking is the number one preventable cause of death. Over 11,000 Hoosiers die each year from smoking-related causes. Additionally, 15% of pregnant women smoke, impacting 12,000 births each year.

Indiana's smoking rates are bad for business. Indiana businesses spend nearly \$3 billion annually on smoking-related health care costs. Each smoking employee costs Indiana businesses \$22 per day. Additionally, smokers cost employers \$3.17 billion annually in lost productivity.

The single most effective way to decrease smoking is to increase the tax. Raising the cigarette tax will immediately reduce smoking rates, especially among low-income populations, racial minorities, and youth. An increase of \$1.50 will encourage over 50,000 adult

Hoosiers to quit smoking and prevent 43,000 youth from ever starting.

RAISE THE STATEWIDE LEGAL AGE TO PURCHASE TOBACCO PRODUCTS TO 21

Data shows that 95 percent of adult smokers start before they are 21. Increasing the minimum sale age for tobacco products to 21 is a promising strategy to reduce smoking and other tobacco product use among youth, especially when complementing other strategies to reduce tobacco use, including higher tobacco taxes, strong smoke-free air laws, and well-funded, sustained tobacco prevention and cessation programs.

Youth are heavily targeted by the tobacco industry. Nearly all tobacco users become addicted before age 21. Therefore, increasing the legal age to purchase tobacco products to 21 will help prevent young people from ever starting to smoke and will help reduce the deaths, disease, and health care costs caused by tobacco use.

A report by the Institute of Medicine strongly concluded that raising the legal age to purchase tobacco products to 21 will have a substantial positive impact on public health and save lives. The study found that increasing the tobacco age will significantly reduce the number of adolescents and young adults who start smoking. This reduces smoking-caused deaths and immediately improves the health of adolescents, young adults and young mothers who would be deterred from smoking, as well as their children.



LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

2018

HEALTH

REQUIRE SCHOOL EMPLOYEES TO PARTICIPATE IN EVIDENCE BASED MENTAL HEALTH AND SUICIDE PREVENTION TRAINING

It is not uncommon for children from immigrant families to live in “mixed status” families. Mixed status refers to family members having different citizenship statuses. Detention and deportation policies have created an atmosphere of fear and intimidation that prevents some children and families from going about their daily lives. This fear of family separation brings harm to children’s mental and physical health. It has also led to an increase in anxiety in children that is described as “toxic stress”, despite the immigration status of the children. Toxic stress can impede the ability to learn and develop social skills while posing long-term health consequences. Yet, according to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, Latinos are less likely to access mental and behavioral health care resources, especially children and young adults.

Training school employees to identify students with or at risk for mental health concerns and to provide support could help them succeed and access services.

AUTHORIZE INDIANA STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH TO DESIGNATE PERINATAL LEVELS OF CARE

Infant mortality is a reflection of the overall state of maternal health, as well as the quality and accessibility of primary health care available to pregnant women and infants. Currently, 7 out of every 1,000 Hoosier infants die before their first birthday. The rate is slightly higher for Latino Hoosiers at 8 out of every 1,000. This translates to about 600 babies every year. Indiana has the eighth-highest infant mortality rate in the nation. If the state lowered its rate to just the national average, 118 infants would be saved every year. If it improved its rate to better than the national average, it would save even more infants.

Babies die for any number of complex reasons. Premature delivery, low birthweight, poverty, stress, nutrition, pollution, and access to health care can all be contributing factors.

Allowing the State Department of Health to establish a program that certifies perinatal levels of care designations for licensed hospitals and birthing centers that provide birthing services would increase quality of care and help reduce Indiana’s infant mortality rates.



LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

2018

IMMIGRATION

On September 5, 2017 the Justice Department announced it was ending the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, creating uncertainty for the futures of almost 800,000 Dreamers. ILI supports comprehensive immigration reform that ultimately provides a path to citizenship for individuals who meet reasonable requirements.

SUPPORT COMPREHENSIVE FEDERAL IMMIGRATION REFORM

This DACA program was implemented in 2012 and allowed young people who were brought to this country through no fault of their own the ability to live, work, and go to school in the United States. According to USCIS, there are nearly 800,000 DACA recipients in the United States and 9,898 in Indiana. The decision by the administration to end DACA without a ready alternative was deeply distressing to not just the recipients and their families, but to our entire State and Nation. The average DACA recipient is 25 years old and entered this country when they were just 6 years old.

Work authorization is critical in helping DACA recipients participate more fully in the labor force. The data shows that 91 percent of recipients are currently employed and contribute significantly to the economy. DACA recipients in Indiana pay over \$23.2 million a year in state and local taxes. If a legislative solution is not found, the annual loss to Indiana's economy would be \$516.4 million. Employers nationwide would face

about \$6.3 billion in costs to replace their DACA recipients. This economic contribution benefits all Americans.

According to the nonpartisan Niskanen Center, a permanent legislative solution for the Dreamers would result in nearly 1,200 new jobs in Indiana, along with \$814 million in additional economic growth over 10 years and \$220 million in new federal tax revenues.

The Center for American Progress estimates that six percent of DACA recipients have started businesses. Fifteen percent have purchased homes and two-thirds have bought a car. Their large purchases matter in terms of state revenue, as states collect a percentage of the purchase price in sales tax, along with additional registration and title fees. Additionally, all of this activity drives growth in the United States.

Polls released by Politico, CBS, Washington Post and ABC, and Fox News show that the American public overwhelmingly supports giving Dreamers the opportunity to stay in the U.S. Additionally, over 400 U.S. CEOs from some of America's largest companies including Amazon, Google, Facebook, AT&T, and more than 700 college and university presidents have signed onto letters and statements asking Congress to pass a bipartisan solution for Dreamers.



LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

2018

PUBLIC SAFETY

Legislators have an opportunity to increase public safety by making changes that reinforce the belief that Indiana is a safe and welcoming place for all. ILI supports recognizing crimes that are motivated by bias and providing undocumented immigrants with the opportunity to obtain driver's licenses.

ENACT A BIAS CRIMES STATUTE

Indiana is one of only five states without a bias crimes statute. According to the FBI, between 2008 and 2015, Indiana cities, towns, and universities reported nearly 400 bias crimes. The actual number is likely much higher since many major cities, including Indianapolis, failed to report incidents for multiple years.

A hate crime is a criminal act against a person or property in which the perpetrator chooses the victim because of the victim's real or perceived race, religion, national origin or ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender. What makes hate crimes different from other criminal acts is whenever a bias-motivated crime is committed, often the victim's entire community is left feeling victimized, vulnerable, fearful, isolated, and unprotected by the law. Therefore, the impact of this type of bias-motivated crime is far greater than the already terrible impact on the individual.

According to a report released by the FBI, more than half of hate crime incidents are motivated by race, ethnicity, or ancestry. These hate crimes terrorize our communities by making certain classes afraid to live

freely and to move about in their community. Implementing a law that stands against hate crimes, and stipulates enhanced penalties for committing one, will show Hoosiers, visitors, and businesses that Indiana welcomes all.

ALLOW UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS TO OBTAIN DRIVER'S LICENSES

Allowing undocumented immigrants to obtain driver's licenses would improve public safety by making Indiana's roads safer and would put the safety of all motorists ahead of the politics of immigration. All Hoosiers, regardless of immigration status, would have the opportunity to be tested, licensed, and insured. In addition to making roads safer by increasing the number of drivers on our roads who understand the driving laws and are insured, offering undocumented immigrants the opportunity to obtain driver's licenses would increase state revenue associated with driver's licenses and car registration fees.

Allowing access to a driver's license would also increase the engagement of residents in the economic, social, and cultural life of the state. Immigrant families would be able to carry on with their lives without the fear of being stopped by the police and fined or charged with driving without a license for performing everyday tasks. Eliminating this fear would promote fuller integration into our communities.

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A Trusted Voice.

Our mission is to improve health and advance education for the Indiana Latino community through statewide advocacy, research, and culturally responsive programs.

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