



**INDIANA
LATINO
INSTITUTE**



Legislative Agenda

2019



LEGISLATIVE
AGENDA

2019

LETTER FROM THE
President and CEO

Over the course of our existence, the Indiana Latino Institute (ILI) has offered effective programs and strong initiatives that have benefited Latinos throughout the state of Indiana. Established in 2001 as a statewide effort to aid Latino-serving organizations, ILI originally committed time and energy specifically to health-related programming; however, ILI has grown to address other issues of importance to Latino communities. ILI currently has a significant focus on educational support, an increased dedication to cultivating Latino leadership, and has expanded its concentration on health issues.

Our daily work fulfills ILI's 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 consistent pace. As the Indiana Latino population increases, it is imperative that our elected leaders recognize and address important issues that impact our community.

ILI's *2019 Legislative Agenda* reflects priorities that are critical to improving lives for Latinos across the state. Addressing Economic Improvement through Workforce Development, Education, Health, Immigration, and Encouraging Diversity will positively impact Indiana socially, culturally, and economically.

As a trusted voice for the Indiana Latino community, we must continue to move forward in all our organizational efforts. It is our hope that you will join us in our efforts.

Marlene Dotson
President & CEO
Indiana Latino Institute

Indiana Latino Institute



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THE ISSUES

Economic Improvement through Workforce Development.....

Support and Expand Indiana’s Next Level Jobs Initiative, including the Workforce Ready Grants

Education.....

Ensure Eligibility for In-State Tuition and Financial Aid Opportunities for Undocumented Students by Restoring State Statutes

Expand Availability and Access to Early Childhood Education Opportunities

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

Amend the Indiana Graduation Pathways Diploma Requirements to be More Inclusive

Health

Increase Indiana’s Current Cigarette Tax by \$2 per Pack

Raise the Statewide Legal Age to Purchase Tobacco Products from 18 to 21

Repeal Preferential Treatment for Smokers in the Workplace (“Smokers’ Bill of Rights”)

Immigration

Support Comprehensive Immigration Reform at the Federal Level

Encourage Diversity.....

Enact a Bias Crimes Statute

Allow Undocumented Immigrants to Obtain Driver’s Licenses or Recognize Licenses from Other States



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ECONOMIC IMPROVEMENT THROUGH WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Two million Hoosiers require additional training to compete in the 21st Century workforce. Simultaneously, there will be over one million job openings in Indiana due to retirements and the creation of new jobs in the next decade. Workforce Development increases the size of and strengthens our workforce, leading to economic improvement for all.

EXPAND INDIANA'S WORKFORCE READY GRANT

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, almost 30% of Latino Hoosier adults aged 25 and older have obtained a high school diploma or an equivalent education but have not completed any higher education. An additional 20% have completed some college or have obtained an associate degree. These Latino Hoosiers can help Indiana meet the needs of its workforce by participating

in the state's Next Level Jobs Initiative, specifically the Workforce Ready Grant. This initiative, under the Next Level Jobs program, gives more Hoosiers access to free, high-value credentials in key industries. This grant targets in-demand occupations within high-growth sectors of Indiana's economy.

An expansion of the Next Level Jobs Initiative, specifically the Workforce Ready Grant for working-age individuals, is necessary to meet the needs of Indiana's workforce.



Indiana Latino Institute



EDUCATION

Less than 13% of Indiana's Latino adult population has a bachelor's degree or higher and only 21% has some college or an associate degree (2015 American Community Survey). Since 2006, Latino student enrollment in Indiana K-12 public schools have risen from 59,869 (5.8% of total public-school enrollment) to 106,048 in 2014 (10.2% of total public-school enrollment). It is clear that the Indiana Latino population continues to grow, yet there remain significant gaps for educational attainment and resources.

Indiana can positively impact Latino student success by amending current education policies to improve access to early childhood education, amend the Indiana Graduation Pathways diploma requirements to be more inclusive, improve college access and affordability, as well as address the disparities in college completion among minority students.

ENSURE ELIGIBILITY FOR IN-STATE TUITION AND FINANCIAL AID OPPORTUNITIES FOR UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS BY RESTORING STATE STATUTES

It is crucial to ensure in-state college and university tuition and financial aid eligibility for undocumented students who have matriculated through the Indiana K-12 school system, by restoring state statutes.

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 has invested in them throughout their K-12 education. One of the major barriers affecting undocumented student access to higher education is a low socioeconomic background and the ability to acquire the necessary financial resources to attend college or a university. The State further reduces higher education success for undocumented students and its return on investment by imposing a policy that severely limits their future social

and economic mobility. This is neither beneficial for Indiana nor the United States.

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

EXPAND AVAILABILITY AND ACCESS TO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES

There are half a 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 educational experience. According to the Annie E. Casey Foundation (2017), just 55% of Latino children ages 3 to 5 are enrolled in Pre-K education. The participation in high quality early childhood education will increase school readiness for Hoosier children. There is strong evidence that shows students who attend a Pre-K program develop the emotional, academic, and social skills they may otherwise lack, and are thus more prepared to learn and engage in the classroom than their peers who did not attend a Pre-K program.

Research shows that high-quality Pre-K education attendance yields benefits for children, schools, and communities. Not only do students achieve higher reading and math scores, lower rates of grade retention, and special education placement, but they are less likely to be on welfare or involved in the criminal justice system and are more likely to be employed and paying income taxes.



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EDUCATION

ADD MINORITY COMPLETION TO THE 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% 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%, compared to 41.6% for Whites. The on-time completion rate for Hispanics at two-year institutions is 6.5% compared to 9.5% for Whites. Extended time completion rates for Hispanics at four-year institutions is 46.8 % compared to 68.6% for Whites. Extended-time completion rates at two-year institutions are 26.6 % for Hispanics compared to 32.1% for Whites. Completion rates for Black students is also alarming and supports the need to add minority completion to the state's current performance funding formula.

Indiana cannot allow such an educational disparity to remain unaddressed if it wants to achieve a highly educated population and ensure a strong economy. Indiana already utilizes performance funding variables in its higher education funding formula but adding minority completion would incentivize Indiana's state funded colleges and universities to implement programs and services that positively impact minority student success and completion rates.

AMEND THE INDIANA GRADUATION PATHWAYS DIPLOMA REQUIREMENTS TO BE MORE INCLUSIVE

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

Under this plan, a high school diploma may be out of reach for special student populations. Students who have a disability, struggle academically, or are English-language learners need to be considered when implementing the new high school graduation pathway requirements. The graduation pathways diploma requirements must be further amended to be more inclusive for all students.





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HEALTH

Indiana consistently ranks near the bottom of all 50 states for health in America's Health Rankings report, but we believe Hoosiers deserve healthier and more productive lives.

INCREASE INDIANA'S CURRENT CIGARETTE TAX BY \$2 PER PACK

Indiana's smoking rate is 21.8%, which is higher than the national average of 17.1% (Center for Disease Control). Tobacco use directly impacts both smokers and nonsmokers. Secondhand smoke exposure has been shown to increase the risk for developing heart disease, cancer, respiratory problems, as well as irritation of the eyes and nasal passages.

Smoking is the number one preventable cause of death. Over 11,100 Hoosiers die each year from smoking-related causes. In Indiana, more than 13% of pregnant women smoke and among the Medicaid population, 30% of women smoke while pregnant.

Indiana's smoking rates are also bad for business. Each employee who smokes costs Indiana businesses \$22 per day and nearly \$3 billion annually on smoking-related health care costs. It also costs 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 \$2.00 per pack is projected to encourage over 70,000 adult Hoosiers to quit smoking and prevent 58,000 youth from ever starting.

RAISE THE STATEWIDE LEGAL AGE TO PURCHASE TOBACCO PRODUCTS FROM 18 TO 21

Data shows that more than 95% of adult smokers start smoking before they turn 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 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 and nearly all tobacco users become addicted before age 21; therefore, it is imperative to increase the legal age to purchase tobacco products to 21. This would help prevent youth from ever starting to smoke as well as reduce deaths, disease, and health care costs caused by tobacco use.

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



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IMMIGRATION

Comprehensive immigration reform that ultimately provides a path to citizenship for individuals who meet reasonable requirements will benefit over 9,000 young Hoosiers.

SUPPORT COMPREHENSIVE FEDERAL IMMIGRATION REFORM

The Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program was implemented in 2012, allowing young people who were brought to the United States through no fault of their own, the ability to live, work, and go to school. According to U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services (USCIS), there are nearly 800,000 DACA recipients in the United States and 9,898 in Indiana. The average DACA recipient is 25 years old and entered this country when they were just 6 years old.

In 2017, the current administration made a decision to end DACA without a ready alternative, which not only deeply distressed the recipients and their families, but our entire State and Nation. It is imperative that DACA remains viable and provides a path to citizenship.

Work authorization is critical in helping DACA recipients participate more fully in the labor force. The data shows that 91% 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. 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, \$814 million in additional economic growth over 10 years, and \$220 million in new federal tax revenues.

The Center for American Progress estimates that 6% of DACA recipients have started businesses, 15% have purchased homes, and two-thirds have bought a car. Their large purchases positively impact state revenue, as states collect a percentage of the purchase price in sales tax, in addition to registration and title fees. Ultimately, this activity drives growth in the United States.

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



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ENCOURAGE DIVERSITY

Legislators have a unique opportunity to encourage diversity and protect minorities by making changes that reinforce the belief that Indiana is a safe and welcoming place for all. It is critical that Indiana recognize crimes that are motivated by bias, in addition to providing undocumented immigrants the opportunity to obtain driver's licenses and have out-of-state licenses be recognized.

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 also known as hate 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. The impact of this type of bias-motivated crime not only affects the victim themselves, but creates a ripple effect, affecting the community as a whole.

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.

Latino Hoosiers would benefit from a bias crime statute that would enact penalties for criminal offenses, where it can be proven that the victim or target is intentionally selected because of personal characteristics enumerated by law.

ALLOW UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS TO OBTAIN DRIVER'S LICENSES OR RECOGNIZE LICENSES FROM OTHER STATES

Allowing undocumented immigrants to obtain driver's licenses would encourage diversity and directly improve public safety. This decision would put the safety of all motorists ahead of immigration politics, as all Hoosiers, regardless of immigration status, would have the opportunity to be tested, licensed, and insured. In addition, offering undocumented immigrants the opportunity to obtain driver's licenses would increase state revenue associated with driver's license 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 perform everyday tasks without the fear of being stopped by the police and fined or charged for driving without a license. Eliminating this fear would promote fuller integration into our communities. Recognizing licenses obtained in other states would have a similar impact.

**INDIANA
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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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