



National Council of La Raza California NCLR Affiliate Network 2005 Advocacy Day

There are more than 12 million Latinos residing in California. One in every three Californians is of Hispanic origin and more than half of all babies born in the state are Latino. As a significant and growing presence in school systems, the workforce, the electorate, and the broader fabric of American economic and social life, the Latino community's prospects are inextricably linked to those of the state as a whole. The National Council of La Raza (NCLR) and the California NCLR Affiliate Network (CNAN) believe that taking action on the following items is an important step that can help ensure that Latinos and all Californians are safe, are treated fairly, receive high-quality education, have access to health care, and create sustainable, strong communities.

Preschool for All – Teacher Corps

Throughout the nation, and particularly in California, the quality of preschool programs is related to the availability of well-prepared teachers who have the skills and training to effectively serve a linguistically- and culturally-diverse child population. Nearly half (46%) of all three- to five-year-old children in the state are Latino, yet only 37% of Latino children in this age group are enrolled in preschool. Moreover, 39% of the state's preschool-aged child population are English language learners (ELLs). In order for a preschool system to be effective, the preschool workforce must include Latinos and teachers with expertise in serving ELLs. Recent studies underscore that bilingual teachers can be effective in engaging and building trust with parents and families of diverse cultural and language backgrounds. There is mounting research demonstrating that having teachers with higher levels of formal education and training in child development improves classroom quality and leads to better outcomes for children.

- *NCLR urges policy-makers to support AB 1254 (Coto), which will increase the number of highly-qualified teachers and personnel with expertise in working with limited-English-proficient children by upgrading the qualifications and skills of noncertified early childhood educators to meet professional standards. AB 1254 will leverage the skills of the current workforce, create an infrastructure to train the next generation of teachers, include significant outreach and recruitment strategies for the Latino community, and provide financial assistance.*

Health Care Disparities

Cultural and linguistic competency skills are essential for providing quality health care to California's diverse patient population. Instruction in cultural and linguistic competency will help address the problems of racial, ethnic, linguistic, and gender-based disparities in medical treatment decisions. A report by the Institute of Medicine stated that minorities do not receive the same quality of medical care as nonminorities despite similar health plans because of language barriers, cultural differences, and racial and ethnic disparities. In 2003, the Task Force on Culturally and Linguistically Competent Physicians and Dentists reported that "because health care providers frequently do not understand unique cultural beliefs about health care that many consumers hold, and do not consider culture when developing a treatment plan, many consumers are given treatment regimes that they will not follow. As a result, it is more important than ever that health care providers possess a degree of cultural competency that they bring to interactions with their patients."

- *NCLR urges legislators to support AB 1195 (Coto), which requires physicians and surgeons to complete continuing education courses in the subjects of cultural and linguistic competency care. These courses are a one-time requirement of 16 credit hours to be completed within a span of four years. The bill also exempts physicians and surgeons who are not engaged in direct patient care or consultation. NCLR believes this is an important step to help reduce the gap between racial and ethnic health disparities in the California health care system. With the existing and growing diverse population in the state, health*

care providers need to learn and understand the priorities of minority communities in order to ensure the well-being and productivity of all California residents.

Nutrition Health Counseling

Research demonstrates that the growing number of overweight and obese Californians is contributing to serious health conditions such as type 2 diabetes, heart disease, hypertension, stroke, and certain types of cancer. These conditions tend to be more prevalent among minorities, especially Latinos. Research demonstrates that 48% of Latinos are overweight compared to 20% of Whites. More than one in five Latinos is obese, compared to one in 20 Asians. Studies also show that good nutrition, including eating five or more servings of fruits and vegetables a day, can help reduce the risk of serious health problems and chronic diseases. However, low-income families have limited access to preventative health counseling courses, such as in nutrition, under current state-sponsored managed care plans.

- *NCLR urges legislators to support SB 454 (Ortiz) which requires HMOs to provide nutrition education courses, in a culturally-and linguistically-appropriate manner, to beneficiaries of Medi-Cal and Healthy Families Programs to promote nutrition education, increase physical activity, and expand participation in federal nutrition programs. Given the fiscal crisis in California, NCLR understands the challenges of expanding health care services; however, this is a cost-savings measure. Research indicates that healthier Californians spend less in medical costs, are more productive, and live healthier lives. Also, current state-sponsored managed care health plans have already allocated funding to provide health education courses. NCLR believes that this is an opportunity to leverage existing systems and structures to achieve improved results and impact on Californians' health.*

Promote Affordable Housing by Closing Loopholes in the Anti-NIMBY Law

California is facing its greatest housing crisis ever. The rising costs of housing now greatly outpace the earning power of many working Californians, especially Hispanic families who have a relatively low homeownership rate. The housing shortage in California has also resulted in higher housing costs for businesses. Barriers to affordable housing developments include exclusive local land use practices where local NIMBY opposition opposes affordable housing projects.

- *NCLR urges policy-makers to support SB 575 (Torlakson), which promotes the development of affordable housing by closing loopholes in the anti-NIMBY law. This bill would revise the conditions upon which disapproval or a conditional approval of a housing development project is based. A jurisdiction cannot deny an affordable housing project based on zoning inconsistency unless its housing element is in compliance and identifies as adequate.*

Prevailing Wage Rates

Existing law require the payment of the prevailing rate of per diem wages and the prevailing rate for holiday and overtime work to employees on public works projects that cost more than \$1,000. The Director of Industrial Relations (DIR) determines these wage rates and publishes these rates on the Internet, allowing easy access to contractors and developers who are responsible for paying the mandated wages. However, developers of residential projects must submit a request to DIR for each wage rate needed. Under this system, nonprofit developers have waited up to six months for the rates to be calculated, resulting in lost project funding or increased borrowing costs.

- *NCLR urges policy-makers to support SB 940 (Torlakson), which would allow nonprofit developers the same access as contractors and developers to wage information over the Internet. This would ensure the leveling of carrying costs as well as project funding security and save construction time.*