

Virginia Latino Leaders Council

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The Virginia Latino Leaders Council is a nonpartisan statewide organization of Latino leaders and activists who focus on Latino civic engagement. The Council communicates with Latino voters and Virginia state government officials to ensure that Virginia remains a welcoming community for all.

Press Conference Remarks - July 27, 2022 (Remarks have been edited for accuracy)

Welcome by Andres Tobar, VLLC Executive Director

Good morning, Buenos Dias

My name is Andres Tobar, Executive Director of the Virginia Latino Leaders Council. We are holding this press conference today to raise our voices in protest to the cruel actions from Virginia's Governor against Latino and immigrants. But we also want to take this opportunity to educate folks about who we are.

Latinos comprise about 10.2% of Virginia's population, or about 882,000. More than two-thirds of Latinos are legally here as U.S. citizens or legal residents. Over 250,000 are eligible to vote. The reason we have concentrated so much of our efforts in helping undocumented Latinos is because they have so much to contribute. But because we have a broken immigration system and because some politicians have demonized our community, undocumented Latinos are regulated to live in the shadows. We are using our organizations and leaders to raise our voices to tell Virginians Latinos and the immigrant community ARE givers! We are not takers! Our communities are paying millions of dollars each year in numerous taxes to pay for ALL our children's education, our public utilities and our safe streets. Several studies conducted in Virginia have clearly demonstrated that the immigrant communities are contributing much more than they are costing.

As presenters today, we are delighted to have the Honorable J. Walter Tejada, President of the Virginia Latino Leaders Council, whose community activism and thirteen years of service in the Arlington County Board has earned him national recognition as a fighter for immigrant rights; followed by Beatriz Amberman, Vice President of VLLC and Chair of the Virginia Coalition of Latino Organizations, or VACOLAO whose leadership has brought the voices of hundreds of Latinos and immigrants to the halls of the Virginia State Legislature and the State Capitol; and finally, Karen Vallejos, Executive Director of The Dream Project, whose program has raised hundreds of thousands of dollars in scholarships to make it possible for Dreamers to be able to go to college.

Muchas gracias!

Remarks by the Honorable J. Walter Tejada, VLLC President

Why is VA Governor Glenn Youngkin Establishing a Divisive Pattern?

The Virginia Latino Leaders Council along with many partner organizations and community activists throughout the commonwealth today are expressing our deep concern and disappointment with the divisive pattern Governor Glenn Youngkin seems to be establishing - this, just a few months into his term.

Why did the governor take this action? What was the real reason?

With his deplorable decision, the Governor chose to pull the rug from under the feet of Virginia's Latino and immigrant students, many of whom come from low-income households. These students are among the best and brightest graduates from our high schools.

With this deplorable decision, known as his Amendment No. 8 in this year's budget, Governor Youngkin is pitting young Latino/immigrant students against students attending Historically Black Colleges and Universities. At a time when Virginia has about a 2 billion dollar surplus, why is this necessary? Why intentionally pit one community-in-need against another? Is this now part of the divisive pattern Governor Youngkin wants to establish?

Well let's see. In the short time he has been in office, this Governor has divided the community with his focus on the non-existent teaching of critical race theory to children, creating a tip line to snitch on teachers, suppressing books in our schools, appointing people to commissions who want to keep confederate/racists symbols in public display, and now pitting one minority community against another with his Amendment No. 8, and with it dashing the educational aspirations of Latino and immigrant students.

The Latino community stands in solidarity with the African American community and we will not allow these types of decisions to drive a wedge between us. Of course additional funding should go to support HBCUs, but why did Governor Youngkin make this deplorable decision, opposed by the vast majority of Latino Virginians?

Governor Youngkin, please do not choose to deny educational opportunities to Latino and immigrant students. Instead of dividing communities, why don't you work to bring us together?

Remarks by Beatriz Amberman,

Chair, Virginia Coalition of Latino Organizations

We are concerned to see that political interests are being prioritized over community needs and unity.

On July 21st, Governor Youngkin announced a nearly \$2 billion dollar budget surplus. And despite this fact, he decided to take away the \$10 million that was previously budgeted for Latino DACA student scholarships, and instead, gave it to Historically Black colleges and universities.

Sacrificing one community over another for a personal political game must not be done. It is unfortunate that some political leaders took the bait and decided to join in on this game of division

The Latino community supports educational funding for ALL of our youth, period, and we'll be mobilizing our community to elect leaders that unite, not divide.

DACA individuals contribute billions of dollars to the economy. They pay approximately \$47 million in local and state taxes and more than \$70 million in federal taxes.

Among all DACA-eligible residents, 93% are employed! We are not only hurting DACA individuals, we are hurting local economies, communities, schools, employers, and businesses that depend on these young people as workers and customers

"Hard-working Virginia students who are African American, Latino, Asian, Native American, and of other diverse backgrounds, deserve our investment. Our collective prosperity depends on the success of our future generations.

We urge the Governor and our elected leaders, to restore scholarship funding for Latinos and expand educational funding to benefit all diverse groups. The almost \$2 billion surplus makes this achievable

We call on our Latino community, regardless of party affiliation, to join us in our advocacy for equal rights, justice, and representation for Latinos in Virginia. Please register and vote in our upcoming November elections.

SPANISH

Nos preocupa ver que los intereses políticos están siendo priorizados sobre las necesidades y la unidad de la comunidad.

El 21 de julio, el gobernador Youngkin anunció un excedente presupuestario de casi \$2 mil millones de dólares. Y a pesar de eso, decidió quitar los \$10 millones de dólares que se presupuestaron previamente para las becas de los estudiantes latinos de DACA y, en su lugar, dárselos a colegios y universidades Afro-Americanas.

No se debe sacrificar a una comunidad por otra en aras de un beneficio político personal. Es lamentable que algunos líderes políticos mordieron el anzuelo y decidieron unirse a este juego de división.

La comunidad latina apoya el financiamiento de la educación para TODOS nuestros jóvenes, punto, y movilizaremos a nuestra comunidad para elegir líderes que unan, no dividan.

Las personas DACA aportan miles de millones de dólares a la economía. Pagan aproximadamente \$47 millones en impuestos locales y estatales, y más de \$70 millones en impuestos federales.

¡Entre todos los residentes elegibles para DACA, el 93% están empleados!

No solo estamos perjudicando a las personas con DACA al quitarles estas becas, sino que también estamos perjudicando a las economías locales, sino también a las economías locales, las comunidades y las escuelas, a los empleadores y las empresas que dependen de estos jóvenes como trabajadores y clientes.

Los estudiantes de Virginia que trabajan arduamente y que son afroamericanos, latinos, asiáticos, nativos americanos y de otros orígenes diversos merecen nuestra inversión. Nuestra prosperidad colectiva depende del éxito de TODAS nuestras generaciones futuras.

Instamos al Gobernador y a los líderes electos de Virginia a que restablezcan los fondos de becas para los latinos y amplíen los fondos para la educación en beneficio de todos los grupos diversos. Los casi 2 mil millones de excedente presupuestario hace que esto sea realizable.”

Hacemos un llamado a nuestra comunidad latina, independientemente de su afiliación política, para que se una a nosotros en nuestra defensa de la igualdad de derechos, la justicia y la representación de los latinos en Virginia.

Regístrese y vote en nuestras próximas elecciones de noviembre.

Remarks by Karen D. Vallejos Corrales
Executive Director, The Dream Project

We at the Dream Project are saddened and angered by the General Assembly's decision on Friday, June 17, to pass Amendment 8.

The Virginia General Assembly has chosen to create barriers for the thousands of young Virginians and deny them the same benefits as their peers. Rather than prioritizing funding for underserved student groups, the decision promotes a false narrative that we must choose between latino immigrants and Black students. When in fact the decision will affect immigrant students of all racial backgrounds. Funding for higher education should be a priority for all students who are in need.

The students affected by this decision represent some of the best and brightest in the Commonwealth with different racial and ethnic backgrounds, interests, and areas of expertise. The Dream Project continues to support and celebrate these students through our programs. This year's scholarship recipients comprise 100 scholars, all attending more than 20 different colleges and universities in Virginia and across the country. Despite receiving multiple acceptances, many of these students had chosen to stay in Virginia, hoping it would be more affordable than pursuing their degrees. However, now they are anxious and unsure whether this decision will deter them from pursuing a degree in their chosen school. Virginia has already invested in these students through the public K-12 system but is now refusing to acknowledge these students as deserving of the same support as others. Virginia and our country are made prosperous, stronger, and better because of these very same students.

This decision reminds us that systemic injustice still prevails in our Commonwealth and institutions and is in line with a long history of reducing financial aid for students of color. Shortsighted policies like this make it more difficult for thousands of students to better themselves and invest in our country and communities.