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23

Oregon Commission on Hispanic Affairs

BIENNIUM REPORT





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Letter From The Chair

Governor Kotek and Members of the Oregon Legislature:

Indigenous peoples have lived on the lands we now call Oregon for thousands of years residing in one of the most geographically diverse states in the nation. This land was taken by force through settler-colonialism and created into territories. Today, we thrive and reside on these indigenous lands enjoying what they have to offer while embracing the importance of protection and conservation.

I recognize that the abundance of this land has not been shared equitably and the contribution of many different groups have not been fully acknowledged. Systems and structures have offered advantage to some at the expense of others. While the original indigenous communities of Oregon have been uprooted, decimated, and severely oppressed, the Latino community also remains heavily impacted. I am not and never will compare the impacts befallen on different marginalized groups. I recognize and honor the original people who have suffered and will include this group when advocating for the Latino population.

Colonialism has impacted many marginalized groups, I can only speak to the impacts on the Latino community. The Latino community suffers from pay inequities, disparate educational opportunities, and significant barriers accessing health care. Our community suffers from structural and systemic racism that impacts the health and well-being of individuals. These disparities and inequities are a core reason for the existence of the Oregon Commission on Hispanic Affairs.

OCHA is here to amplify the voices of community and inform decision-makers of their needs. I am honored to be the Chair of a Commission who continually strives to decrease these inequities and uplift the Latino community.

I am proud to share with you this 2021-2023 biennium report. It reflects the commitment of our commissioners to eliminate inequities, while showcasing the work the commission has completed and future endeavors.

Dr. Melina Moran
Chair, Oregon Commission of Hispanic Affairs

Melina Moran

"Justice is about making sure that being polite is not the same thing as being quiet."

-Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
U. S. Congresswoman, NY-14

The Status of the Hispanic Community of Oregon

Currently Oregon is the home of 593,619 Latinos, which is 14% of the total population with a median age of 25 years ¹. Latinos are the fastest growing and largest ethnic group in the state. The voting power of Latinos is growing rapidly. The growth rate of the registrations between 2008 and 2012 in Oregon ranked 12th in the country ². The registration of Latinos in Oregon grew by 60.47% during this period, while the rate of White voter registration grew by 6.13% and Black voter registration declined by 13.51% ².

Latinos have the highest labor participation. However, they are largely below the median household income. They earn on average \$40,000 a year. In comparison the average Oregon household earns \$62,000 a year ².

The high school graduation rate of Latinos is 80%, which is 13 points lower than the overall population average ². This is a cause for concern.

Uninsured rate is another area of Inequity with Latinos at a rate of 14.8% vs overall population of 7.4% ³. The housing market continues to be challenging aspect and even more for people of color. The home ownership rate of Latinos is 51.1% vs 65.5% of the overall population of Oregon ⁴.



14%

of the Oregon's total population identify as Latino/a/x



60.5%

Election voting power



80%

High school Graduation Rate.

MISSION AND VISION OF THE COMMISSION

ANNUAL OVERVIEW, GOALS & OBJECTIVES

OUR MISSION & VISION

The Oregon Commission on Hispanic Affairs (OCHA) was created to work for the implementation and establishment of economic, social, legal, and political equity for Hispanics in Oregon. OCHA is a catalyst that empowers partnerships between state government and Hispanic communities in rural and urban areas to ensure success for all Latinos by addressing issues at the policy level.

This includes:

- Advocating for equitable policies assuring the success of Latino and Hispanic Oregonians at the state level.
- Engaging community and state partners to promote equity for Latino and Hispanic populations statewide.
- Studying and analyzing issues affecting the Hispanic community and recommend policy remedies to state policy makers.
- Growing and developing leaders in the Hispanic community at the state level in all branches of government.
- Increasing the viability and visibility of the contributions and achievements of Hispanic Oregonians.

The Commission is authorized by [Oregon Revised Statute 185.310 – 185.330](#).

OCHA began as the Commission on Chicano Affairs and was changed to Hispanic Affairs to broaden and be more inclusive of the population supported and served. Chicano Affairs had an original focus on Mexican farmworkers. While OCHA includes Hispanic in its name, there is acknowledgement of how the term is controversial to many within the populations served, but the Commission continues to wrestle with naming conventions and it remains unsettled. Because of this, you will find the terms Hispanic, Latino, Latine, Latina, and Latinx used interchangeably throughout this report. This in no way contends that any or all of these terms are acceptable or inclusive of all members of the community, but remain placeholder terms until the Commission has resolved what will be the definitive inclusive term for the community it represents.

STATUTORY DUTIES

THE COMMISSION ON HISPANIC AFFAIRS SHALL:

1. Monitor existing programs and legislation designed to meet the needs of the Hispanic population.
2. Identify and research problem areas and issues affecting the Hispanic community and recommend actions to the Governor and the Legislative Assembly, including recommendations on legislative programs.
3. Maintain a liaison between the Hispanic community and government entities.
4. Assist the Governor on the Governor's equity-focused initiatives with policy advice, the study of long-standing community issues and the provision of community input, a community voice and leadership, as requested.
5. Encourage Hispanic representation on state boards and commissions.
6. Meet at least annually in a joint meeting of the Commission on Hispanic Affairs, the Commission on Black Affairs, the Commission for Women and the Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs to consider and act upon issues of mutual importance to the missions and statutory duties of the commissions. [1983 c.132 §3; 2013 c.353 §1; 2021 c.290 §3]

Structure of the Commission

The Commission is comprised of eleven members, nine civilian members appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Oregon Senate to four-year terms and one State Senator and one State Representative appointed to two-year terms respectively by the President of the Oregon Senate and the Speaker of the Oregon House of Representatives. All members abide by the Commission's by-laws and the Oregon Code of Ethics set forth in ORS 244.050.

Meet Our Commissioners



Chair Melina Moran

Bend, OR

Dr. Moran is a second-generation Latina of Mexican and Irish heritage, born and raised in the Pacific Northwest. She is the mother of two active children and enjoys exploring the outdoors with them.

Ms. Moran is a Family Nurse Practitioner. She earned her Doctor of Nursing Practice and Master of Science from Frontier Nursing University and her Bachelor of Science from Portland State University.

Melina has been in the medical field for over 20 years working as an ER/critical care flight nurse, family medicine/primary care provider and has been a member of federal and local disaster teams working stateside and overseas.

In addition to her extensive work experience, Dr. Moran is a member of The National Nurse Led Care Consortium and appointed by Governor Brown to the Oregon Health Policy Board.

As a member of the Latino community, she is passionate about being a change agent in her local, state, and national communities. Her passion is health equity and vows to work toward decreasing disparities and improving health outcomes.

In February 2022, Melina was appointed to the Commission of Hispanic Affairs by Governor Kate Brown.



Vice-Chair Josefina Riggs

Redmond, OR

Josefina Nury Riggs arrived in the United States from Venezuela on July 4, 1995, with her son Zydlei who was 3 years old. They lived in El Paso, Texas for over a year and then moved to Troutdale, Oregon.

Josefina met her husband Bill while living in Gresham. After several years together, they decided to move to Redmond, OR. Since arriving in the US, she has worked as a volunteer at Head Start, Cascade Aids Project (Apoyo Latino), and Catholic Charities.

While living in Central Oregon, she became a social justice activist with CAUSA, Jobs with Justice, Strong Voice and is a Board member of Rural Organizing Project (ROP).

She is an SEIU local 503 general council member and is running for board assistant. She is a prominent advocate for union rights and a volunteer caregiver for people with disabilities. For the past 5 years, she has cared for adolescent clients with special needs. In addition, she teaches Alzheimer's workshops with Central Oregon Alzheimer's Association.

In 2018 she ran for Redmond City Council. After her run, she opened a storefront to promote and assist others in the community to start running for local and state offices, including school boards, political positions, immigration boards, parks and recreation, and fire stations. In addition to uplifting community members as leaders, Josefina will resume hosting her free Spanish classes available to caregivers and their families. These classes promote bilingual services to the rural communities in Oregon in Jefferson, Deschutes, and Crook County.



Commissioner Jonathan Chavez Baez

Ashland, OR

Jonathan Chavez Baez was born in Cuautla Morelos, Mexico. He immigrated to the U.S. at the age of 10. He graduated from Phoenix High School, received his Bachelor of Arts in Communications from Southern Oregon University and his Master of Arts in Education: Educational Leadership and Policy in Higher Education from Portland State University.

For the past 13 years, Jonathan worked for Southern Oregon University in various capacities. In July of 2022, Jonathan became the Director for Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion at Southern Oregon University.

Throughout his career, Jonathan devotes his time working with the Latino/a/x community to increase high school graduation, college enrollment, parent engagement, support to undocumented/DACAmented students, and the creation of numerous programs for underrepresented students. He holds over 20 years of experience working with youth in Southern Oregon. In addition, he is currently the Co-Director of Academia Latina hosted at Southern Oregon University. Jonathan's passion is the implementation of programs in higher education institutions that can help guide underrepresented students obtain a college education. Also at SOU, Jonathan is a member of the Committee for Equity & Diversity (CED), Enrollment Management Council, Diversity Scholarship and Strategic Planning Committees.

In his free time, he is a member of numerous boards and organizations that include the Oregon Community Foundation's Southern Oregon Leadership Council and Latino Partnership Program, the Southern Oregon Latino Scholarship Fund, Phoenix-Talent School District Advisory Board, and Latinx/a/o Interagency Committee. In March 2017, Jonathan was appointed to the Oregon Commission on Hispanic Affairs (OCHA) by Governor Kate Brown. He is now serving his second term with OCHA.



Commissioner Gustavo Morales

Ontario & Forest Grove, OR

Gustavo is the Executive Director of EUVALCREE, based in Eastern Oregon, an organization that develops the social capital and leadership capacity of community members.

Gustavo was appointed by Governor Kate Brown to sit on four positions as: Commissioner on the Oregon Commission on Hispanic Affairs; Board Member for the Oregon Cultural Trust; Environmental Justice Council; and Oregon State Board of Education.

He received his Bachelor of Science in Psychology with a Neuroscience emphasis from Pacific University and is now completing his Master's in Business Administration from Boise State University. In addition to continuing his education and managing a non-profit organization, Gustavo works as an independent consultant supporting businesses to improve their economies of scale, strategize to develop competitive advantage and increase business visibility.



Representative Andrea Salinas

Lake Oswego, OR

For more than 20 years, Representative Andrea Salinas worked on the front lines of politics, to protect and pass policies that help women and children, working people, seniors, and the environment. Andrea first served as an intern to Senator Dianne Feinstein in her San Francisco district office. Then she served as legislative staff to Senator Harry Reid. She would go on to act as tax and trade policy advisor to Congressman Pete Stark. Lastly, she was a district aide to Congresswoman Darlene Hooley.

Prior to becoming a legislator, Andrea worked as an advocate in Salem to help provide Oregon families with a fair shot by increasing the minimum wage, fighting climate change, and providing comprehensive reproductive health care coverage to all Oregon women.

Andrea was appointed to the legislature in September 2017 and won her first election in 2018. Since that time, she has been working to lower the price of prescription drugs, prevent bankruptcy from medical debt, increase the legal remedies for victims of strangulation, and improve sexual harassment investigations in K-12 schools.

Andrea quickly assumed leadership roles in the legislature, where she served as the Chair of the House Committee on Health Care; Co-Chair of the Oregon Complete Count Committee; and Assistant Majority Leader.

In addition, Andrea served on the House Subcommittee on Behavioral Health, Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Services and the Energy & Environment Committee, the Willamette Falls Locks Commission, and the Oregon Public Employees' Benefit Board.

OCHA's ACCOMPLISHMENTS

HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH PROCLAMATION

Governor Kate Brown signed the 2022 Hispanic Heritage Month proclamation that highlights the importance and presence of the Hispanic/Latino/a/x community of Oregon. Celebrating our efforts, history, and contributions to the state.

Each year, Americans observe National Hispanic Heritage Month beginning on the fifteenth of September. Celebrating the histories, cultures, and contributions of Americans whose ancestors came from Spain, Mexico, the Caribbean, Central America, and South America.

The national observation started in 1968 as Hispanic Heritage Week under President Lyndon B. Johnson. On August 17, 1988, the week-long celebration was converted into Hispanic Heritage Month by President Ronald Reagan to cover a 30-day period ending on the fifteenth of October⁵.

Hispanic Heritage Month straddles two calendar months, September and October. This coverage encompasses the national independence days of Mexico and several Central and South American countries. The fifteenth of September is Independence Day for Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. Mexico and Chile celebrate their independence days on the sixteenth and eighteenth of September, respectively. Lastly, Columbus Day or Día de la Raza and Indigenous Peoples' Day fall on the second Monday of October⁵.

OCHA appreciates the proclamation and acknowledgement by Governor Brown. The Hispanic/Latino/a/x community continues to be a major contributor to the history and prosperity of Oregon. We must ensure that the advancements, contributions, and history of the community are known by all Oregonians. We are stronger together!

Hispanic Heritage Month Proclamation

STATE OF OREGON
PROCLAMATION
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

- WHEREAS:** The Hispanic Heritage of the United States historically extends over five centuries and has been a consistent and vital influence in our country's growth and prosperity; and
- WHEREAS:** Oregonians who identify themselves as Hispanic, Latino/a/x, Chicano/a/x, or native Meso Americans—from Mexico, South America, Central America, and the Caribbean—have contributed to our state's history and successes since at least the 1800s; and
- WHEREAS:** Hispanic heritage is Oregon's heritage—it contributes to our diversity, thus enriching life in culture, cuisine, the arts, athletics, the business community, and civic leadership; and
- WHEREAS:** Oregon's Hispanic communities constitute 13.4% of the state's population. Hispanic scientists, nurses, and providers have helped fight COVID-19 and have been on the frontlines caring for our loved ones; our communities are represented by Hispanic elected officials, military personnel, and other Hispanic community leaders; and Hispanic educators teach our children; and
- WHEREAS:** Many leaders in Oregon strive to keep our state inclusive, where the rights of underserved communities are protected, and the values of equity are truly demonstrated in our actions; and
- WHEREAS:** Oregon is proud to join the Nation in celebrating our rich culture and history of Hispanic heritage as we strive to work together to address the equity challenges that still face our Hispanic communities, as well as others, so that they can thrive for generations to come; and
- WHEREAS:** Hispanic Heritage Month serves as a reminder that we draw strength from our immigrant roots. This month we recognize the pivotal role Hispanic people of Oregon play in the strength and prosperity of our state.

NOW,

THEREFORE: I, Kate Brown, Governor of the State of Oregon, hereby proclaim **September 15- October 15, 2022** to be

HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

in Oregon and encourage all Oregonians to join in this observance.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I hereunto set my hand and cause the Great Seal of the State of Oregon to be affixed. Done at the Capitol in the City of Salem in the State of Oregon on this day, August 24, 2022.



Kate Brown, Governor



Shemia Fagan, Secretary of State



LATINO Fest

The Latino Community Association (LCA) of Central Oregon centers its work around serving Oregon’s rural Latino/a/x community, and has done so for the last 22 years. The Association works throughout Central Oregon with coverage across the counties of Crook, Deschutes, and Jefferson, with particular activity in their population centers of Bend, Redmond, Madras, and Prineville. Their mission is “to empower our Latino families to thrive, creating opportunities for advancement, and building bridges that unite and strengthen us all⁶.”



- Programs Provided to Community:**
1. Workforce Education & Training
 2. Family Empowerment
 3. Healthy Families
 4. Cultural Enrichment
 5. Youth Rising Program

Latino Community Association of Central Oregon held their annual LatinoFest at Sahalee Park in Madras, Oregon on September 10, 2022. LatinoFest gathered the Latinx/o/a community from across the state to celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month.



With limited options in many rural areas to celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month, OCHA understood the importance of its presence within the community. OCHA leadership, with support from the Oregon Advocacy Commissions Office, participated in LatinoFest, in conjunction with over forty other organizations. This festival included entertainment and cultural performances, cultural exchange, music, indigenous and Latine vendors, and remarks from community leaders. LatinoFest welcomed all community members into a safe and inviting space. The environment provided the opportunity for an immersive experience in many different cultures that comprise the greater latin community.

* Calaveras, also known as sugar skulls, are decorative skulls made of sugar or clay that are used in the Mexican celebration of Día de Muertos (Day of the Dead). This day commemorates the memory of loved ones who have passed away.



OCHA's participation included tabling and providing information in a booth. OCHA shared tabling space with and amongst vendors, community-based organizations, service providers, and other agencies. The OCHA booth provided a children's workstation that enabled both youth and youth-at-heart to create handmade Calaveras while providing information on OCHA, how it does and can support the latine community, and how individuals may get involved².

OACO staff live-streamed the speeches of the Chair and Vice Chair at the event across social media. Each of OCHA's leaders had an opportunity to address the crowd and share information about themselves, the Commission, and encourage community to become more engaged with their government on all levels. With an increase of in-person events and activities post-pandemic, OCHA plans to continue to engage the community to promote the Commission and strengthen bonds throughout the State.



RURAL HEALTH CONFERENCE PRESENTATION

The Oregon Office of Rural Health (ORH) highlights the health conditions of Oregon's rural community since 1979. Partnering with Oregon Health Science University in 1989, ORH increased its visibility and attention on health disparities within rural communities. With a lack of adequate and efficient sources of health care, ORH began providing grants and scholarships to those regions. They did so in order to help mitigate the problem caused by these inadequacies. ORH grants and scholarships include Critical Access Hospital Owned Provider-Based Rural Health Clinic Innovation, Elder Service Innovation, HERO: Helping EMS in Rural Oregon, and Rural Population Health. Each of these grants and scholarships focused on the specific issues and obstacles in rural communities.

The Rural Health Coordinating Council is the advising body over ORH. It includes the representation of these specific organizations:

- Oregon Medical Association
- Oregon Osteopathic Association
- Oregon Nurses Association
- State Board of Pharmacy
- Oregon State EMT Association
- Coalition of Local Health Officials
- Oregon Association for Home Care
- Oregon Health & Science University
- Oregon Association of Hospitals & Health Systems
- Oregon Dental Association
- Oregon Association of Optometry
- Oregon Association of Physician Assistants
- Oregon Association of Naturopathic Physicians

RURAL HEALTH CONFERENCE PRESENTATION

ORH covers four main critical areas of health care including Rural and Frontier Data, Facilities and Services, Provider Incentives programs and workforce services. ORH hosted its 39th Annual Conference with forty-seven data expert presenters and over 275 attendees. Topics included:

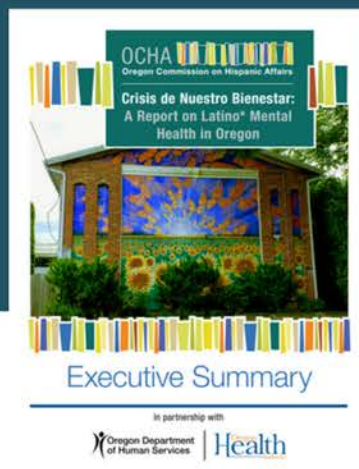
- Building Community Infrastructure to Address Social Determinants of Health and Equity Through Community Information Exchange (CIE)
- Care Compare Methodology Changes & Response for Agile Improvement
- Increasing Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner Workforce in Eastern Oregon: Outcomes, Lessons Learned & Next Steps
- Achieving Quadruple Aim: Rethinking Our Organizational Operating Systems to Become More People- Positive and Complexity-Conscious
- How to Move Your Practice to a More Value-Based Payment Mode
- Project ECHO and a Rural Advisory Panel: Tools to Help Create a Community Health Infrastructure in Rural Oregon
- The Intersection of Oral and Behavioral Health - Can We Meet in the Middle?
- Project Firstline: Infection Control in Health Care
- Funding Strategies for Rural Health Departments
- Building a CAH Quality Network to Enrich Peer-to-Peer Learning and Connections
- Funding Strategies for Rural Health Departments
- Building a CAH Quality Network to Enrich Peer-to-Peer Learning and Connections
- HEART: Healing Ethno-Racial Trauma: A Culturally Designed Model for Trauma Informed Care
- Public Health, CCOs, and Providers Working Together
- Healing After Disaster—Guide with Support
- Crisis de Nuestro Bienestar: Latino Mental Health Barriers & Recommendations in Oregon
- Pathways for Diversifying and Increasing the Number of Health Professional Learners in Oregon
- A Comprehensive Plan for Aging – Making Oregon an Age-Friendly State
- Community Collaborations: Reaching Vulnerable Populations Through Partnerships
- The Role of Rural Facilities in Educating the Workforce

Chair Melina Moran, FNP, Vice Chair Josefina Riggs, and former Commissioner Linda Castillo, presented at Oregon's Rural Health conference. It is of note that former Commissioner Linda Castillo was also a former chair of the Commission. The OCHA leaders presented on mental health issues, barriers, and solutions for Oregon's Latino/a/x rural population which was the specific topic of OCHA's own Crisis de Nuestro Bienestar Report. This two-year research surrounding mental health of Latinos highlighted their specific need for culturally and linguistically competent services and service providers. OCHA's leaders then led the attendees through a mapping-exercise. This exercise gave attendees a realistic viewpoint of a Latino/a/x person in rural Oregon. The attendees were made to identify a network of Latino mental health care providers and state-level policy solutions. OCHA leaders also presented an overview of the geographic and demographic data findings of the report. The interactive presentations given included polling and time for questions, comments, and discussion. For a more equitable presentation OCHA provided both English and Spanish translations. OCHA will continue to promote the vulnerability and needs of the rural Hispanic communities of Oregon through speaking engagements such as at the ORH annual conference.



CRISIS DE NUESTRO BIENESTAR

Latino Mental Health Barriers and Recommendations in Oregon



Crisis de Nuestro Bienestar or Crisis of Our Well-Being was a report initiated by OCHA. The goal of this report is to create and drive policy change from community input, analyses, and recommendations. This joint policy research collaboration on Mental Health & Latinos began in 2017 through a shared interest with Oregon Health Authority (OHA) and Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS). It was created to better understand the mental health (MH) needs and current usage by the Latino community statewide services.

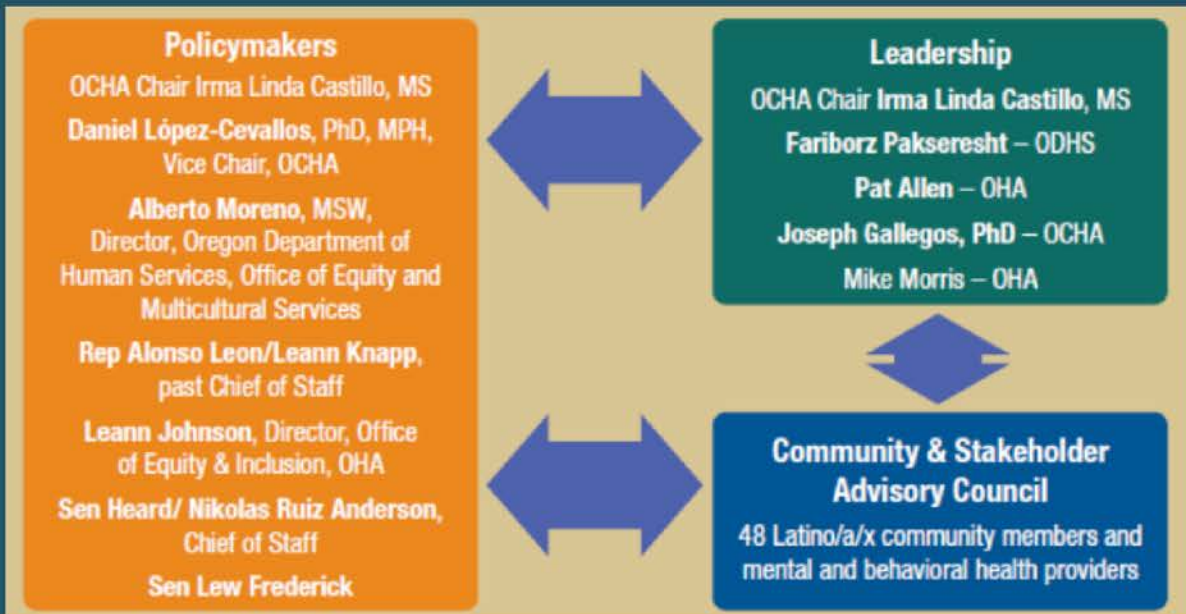
The goals of the applied policy research were to provide:

- A comprehensive picture of current usage and analysis
- Best Practices including cultural relevance, and
- policy recommendations in the context of a seminal report (the first in 15 years)

OCHA felt the necessity to bring forth data driven evidence that supports what the Latino/a/x community in Oregon already knows. Mental health care in Oregon is difficult to access and often ill-suited for Latinos/as/xs. The evidence in this report was provided by Latino/a/x clients and from the mental health provider perspective. This report was the first of its kind. The explicit goal of this partnership with the community and state legislators was to drive policy change. It centers the Latino/a/x community by:

1. Documenting Latino/a/x MH providers experiences through qualitative research,
2. Analyzing state data of Latino/a/x clients in quantitative research, and
3. Engaging Latino/a/x community in developing recommendations

**How this work was done:
Partnership across the Latino/a/x community, State agencies, and State agency leaders**



Finding of Policy Research

Study Titles

[MH Disparities for Latino Oregonians Report PDF \(Voelker\)](#)

[Barriers to Mental Health for Latinos in Oregon \(St. Amour\)](#)

[Mental Health Service Disparities](#)

[Mental Health Service Disparities in the Latino Population: An Exploration of Consequences, Promising Practices, and Opportunities for Improved Access in Oregon - \(Hernandez\)](#)

*All studies can be found <https://www.oregon.gov/oac/Pages/research.aspx>

Mixed Method Research Findings

- Latino/a/x youth access mental health services almost 2x more than the general population.
- School-based services are also well utilized by Latino/a/x youth and their family members
- Differences in reasons for termination for the Latino/a/x population imply the need for more culturally competent and culturally-specific mental health services
- These differences in termination reasons also prompt the need for data collection and research that capture the client perspective
- Mental health practitioner workforce, pipeline and credentialing must be strengthened
- Systemic supports are needed to retain and develop current culturally-specific providers
- Community integration is critical in addressing issues of access, retention, and stigma

Overall Recommendations

- Increase diversity in and providing training for the workforce, pipeline, and credentialing of culturally and linguistically specific MHPs
- Establish as standard practice the appointment of practitioners and people of color, and other historically underserved groups on all licensing boards and public bodies.
- Create dedicated spaces and places for Latino/a/x clients by increasing systemic resources and implementing financial incentives to increase culturally specific mental health programming that combats stigma.
- Ask the Higher Education Coordinating Commission to work with the Oregon Department of Education to address provider workforce needs for Latino/a/x and other Communities of Color in Oregon.
- Increase funding for Latino/a/x and other historically under-resourced behavioral and mental health services in Oregon, with specific breakdowns for funding increases.
- Resource and support a Latino behavioral health task force that centers equity for Latino/a/x, as well as a larger culturally specific behavioral health task force for historically underserved communities. These task forces will focus on applying culturally specific lenses to behavioral and mental health, and on using the Crisis de Nuestro Bienestar report to inform an action agenda for the Oregon Legislature.

The effects of the dynamic report resulted in five separate pieces of legislation that were introduced in the 2021 long session.

***HB 2949**

Requires Oregon Health Authority to provide incentives to increase recruitment and retention of mental health workforce, including pipeline development, scholarships for undergraduates and stipends for graduate students, loan repayments and retention activities.

HB 2368

Establishes pilot program to promote and support positive student mental and behavioral health by using trauma-informed approaches that are culturally responsive.

HB 2369

Directs Department of Education to develop statewide mental and behavioral health care plan for students.

HB 2370

Directs Higher Education Coordinating Commission to conduct needs assessment identifying current mental health provider education programs and curricula offered at community colleges and public universities.

HB 2361

Prioritizes access to health care provider incentive program by behavioral health services providers serving Latino, Latina and Latinx individuals in Morrow, Malheur, Hood River and Umatilla counties.

***BILLS PASSED | ALL BILLS WERE SUPPORTED BY THE OREGON DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES AND OREGON HEALTH AUTHORITY.**

Comments from former Chair Linda Castillo

My first impact of this report is that it is the first of its kind in the State of Oregon to utilize over 30 years of accumulated OHA data to evaluate the provision of Behavioral Health (BH) services and outcomes for the Latino/a/x community. The research the Bienestar report provided and the foundational conversations with providers, community members, State administrators, and legislators is highly informative and compelling.



Secondly, for over 3 decades community members and providers have clearly

indicated a need for culturally and linguistically specific services in modalities that meet the needs of children, youth, adults, families, and older adults and that are responsive and accessible in all parts of Oregon where Latino/a/x live, work, and play. The CCO's have a great responsibility to carry the burden for not reaching the Latino/a/x effectively. The exit data which describes incomplete services or termination of service rests on the provider to better serve the client and not the client to conform to a system that is not culturally specific or responsive to them.

Additionally, the report is a great resource of culturally specific and effective best practice services that meet the BH needs of this community. Lastly, even with this report OHA still lags significantly behind increasing services and creating a mechanism to hold CCO's accountable to provide measures of its effectiveness and evidence of actions to improve its services to this population. Targeted legislation and policy change is required to tie funding to improved outcomes so that Latino/a/x receive the services they deserve. By default, and unofficially as a 'Latino workgroup,' community providers and community members continue to persist in engaging OHA to utilize the Bienestar recommendations and additional BH improvement recommendations to the system to assure and guide changes.

Comments from former Chair Linda Castillo

Next Steps According to Commissioner Castillo

Ongoing research and evaluation of the system is required to unearth the inequities which continue to create an inadequate BH system for Latino/a/x. An updated audit of utilization and service effectiveness to this population to reveal the most current data and identify junctures for improvement. A report on the challenges and barriers to increasing the culturally and linguistically specific provider pool is needed. This would include data on the number of providers within BH from MH (peer providers, QMHA's, QMHP's) to Substance Use Disorder certifications, number of licensure applications, and number of licenses granted, where providers are located across the state with emphasis in rural and pioneer areas, and strategies to increase BH personnel across the state.

Commissioner Castillo's Remarks from the Rural Health Conference 2022

Commissioner Castillo's Remarks from the Rural Health Conference 2022
It was important to share the Bienestar report with local non-Latino/a/x health providers practicing in rural and pioneer areas to increase awareness and urge them to build strategies to improve BH care in concert with the Latino/a/x community who are often in areas where they have no access to services or are ineffectively served. Many providers shared that they were unaware of the dearth of services and how services needed to be tailored to the community served. Additionally, the Bienestar report provided validation to local Latino/a/x BH providers regarding what they are struggling with, how they can connect with other providers to reduce isolation, strategize, advocate for improved services, and seek provider support through the Latino Emotional Health Collaborative.

Key Partners:



OCHA

Irma Linda Castillo, Chair
 Gustavo Morales, Vice Chair
 Dr. Daniel López-Cevallos
 Dr. Joe Gallegos

ODHS

Fariborz Pakseresht, Director

OHA

Steve Allen, Director of Behavioral Health

Oregon Advocacy Commissions Office

Nancy Kramer, Project Manager
 Dr. Connie Kim-Gervey, Policy Analyst/Researcher

Special Thanks to the Mental Health & Latinos Community Advisory Council Members

Akiko Betcher	Commissioner Sharon Meieran	Jorge Gonzalez	Michele Martinez Thompson
Albert Parramon	Cristina Pinzon	Kate O'Donnell	Kristina Narayan
Alexandra M. Aban	Daniel Garcia	Kristin Kane	Olivia Quiroz, Executive Director, Oregon Latino Health Coalition
Anthony D. Medina	Debra Jones	Laurie Huffman	Phillip Blea

Mental Health & Latinos Community Advisory Council Members

Armenia Sarabia	Diana Cazares	Leda Garside	Representative Mitch Greenlick
Blanca Marquez	Dora Best de Cantu	Liliana Herrera Acosta	Representative Diego Hernandez
Dr. Joaquin Borrego Jr.	Enrique Eduardo Andrade	Lucrecia Suarez	Ricardo Verdeguez
Anna Braun	Estela Muñoz Villarreal	Marilyn Gran-Moravec	Rigoberto Contreras
Caitlin Brock	Gustavo Morales	Martha Ochoa	Ruth Zuniga
Carlos Crespo	Holly Heiberg	Mary Oswald	Senator Steiner Hayward
Carolina Castaneda del Rio	Jared Mason-Gere	Marysol Jimenez	Vanessa Servellon
Chanpone Sinlapasai-Okamura	JoAnn Hemstreet	Maureen Hinman	Yesenia Silva



Bills OCHA Supported in 2022 Session

SB 1565

Makes unlawful practice for place of public accommodation to refuse to accept United States coins or currency as payment for goods and services.

HB 4002

Prohibits employers from permitting or requiring agricultural workers to work in excess of maximum allowable hours unless workers are compensated for overtime hours worked.

SB 1539

Establishes pilot program to provide funding to school districts for purposes of increasing access to schools by homeless students and improving academic achievement of homeless students.

HB 4122 A

Directs Department of Human Services to establish program to distribute funds to community-based organizations to provide financial assistance to Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals status recipients for specified purposes.

HB 4150

Requires Health Information Technology Oversight Council to convene one or more groups of stakeholders and experts to explore options to accelerate, support and improve secure, statewide community information exchanges

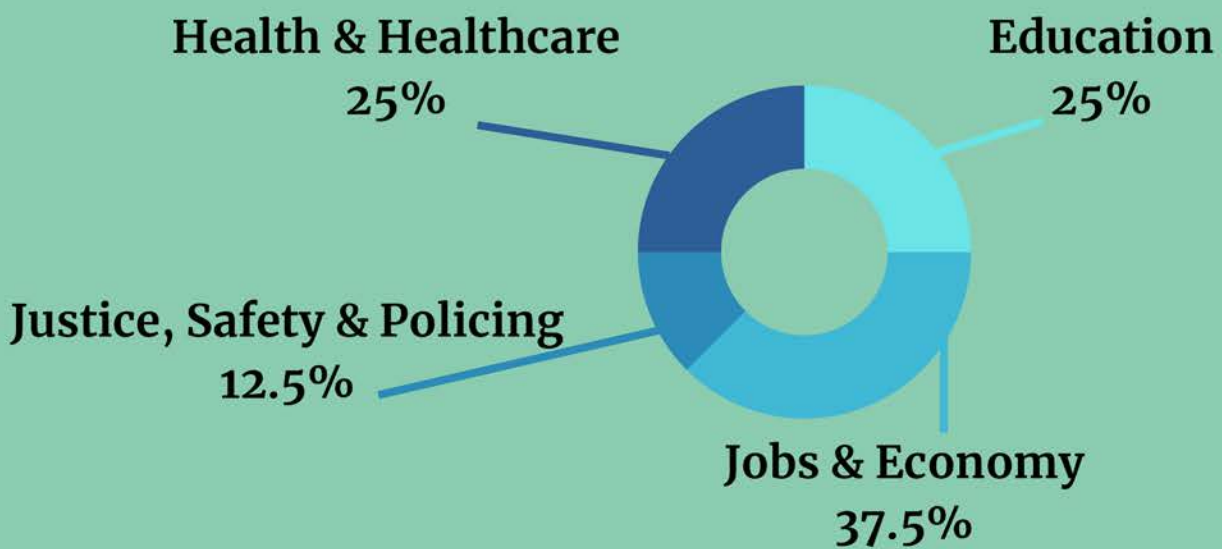
HB 4071

Modifies description of persons eligible for targeted financial incentives in field of behavioral health.

Bills OCHA Supported in 2022 Session

*BILLS PASSED OCHA SUPPORTED

OCHA BILLS TESTIFIED BY STRATEGIC AREAS



* HB 4114

Requires school district to file verified statement of economic interest with Oregon Government Ethics Commission.

* HB 4074

Marijuana licensee to report human trafficking to Oregon Liquor and Cannabis Commission

In 2022, OCHA began research to inform and support HB 2955 (2023), a bill to provide acknowledge of the efforts of the Bracero to the State of Oregon and to create a State Holiday. This was initiated after a community member reached out for support.

OCHA'S SHORT-TERM STRATEGIC FOCUS:

Healthcare

Healthcare is a universal need for all Oregonians. The lack of quality and accessible healthcare impacts individuals, their families, and their communities. OCHA has a short term goal to focus on the impacts to the Latinx population of inequitable access to and quality of healthcare. As exemplified in the Crisis de Nuestro Bienestar Report, the lack of accessible healthcare generally in rural communities remains a significant concern.

Whether in rural or urban areas, access to healthcare remains a significant issue to populations represented by OCHA. The OACO has been tasked with collecting qualitative data on healthcare needs, existing barriers, and the impacts that racism plays in the lives of under-represented groups including the populations represented by OCHA.

Healthcare is a human right. It is also good policy. Access to healthcare enables preventative care which is significantly less expensive than having to manage serious health issues later. The impacts of serious health issues not only impact the individual but also those around them. When individuals and their support systems have to manage health issues,

work productivity and efficiency suffers as well.

As in many areas, scheduled preventative maintenance reduces total costs. OCHA is dedicated to seeing policy move forward to ensure that all Oregonians have access to high quality healthcare and preventative care.

In 2020, the [Census Bureau reported](#) that 49.9 percent of Hispanics had private insurance coverage, as compared to 73.9 percent for non-Hispanic whites. Among Hispanic subgroups, examples of coverage varied: 47.9 percent of Mexicans, 56.3 percent of Puerto Ricans, 57.4 percent of Cubans, 41.7 percent of Central Americans⁷. Though the Affordable Care Act (ACA) helped decrease the 30 percent uninsured rate in 2017. “The uninsured rate among Latinos is still more than double that among non-Latino Whites (20 vs. 8 percent in 2019). Even though Latinos are more likely to be in the workforce than non-Latinos, they are less likely to receive health insurance through their employment and more likely to enroll in Medicaid coverage⁸.” Unfortunately, insurance coverage varies and there are significant differences in the amounts of coverage of different plans.

OCHA'S SHORT-TERM STRATEGIC FOCUS:

Supporting HB 4052

Culturally-specific clinics have served as safe havens for low-income and uninsured migrant and immigrant populations. Clinics such as Rosewood Family Health Centers and Virginia Garcia Memorial Health Centers are two examples in Oregon. These clinics give access to vulnerable populations who lack access to traditional healthcare systems. Rosewood Family Center provides interpreters and covers their costs. Whereas Virginia Garcia health center is known to be, “Everybody’s clinic”. Both clinics are staffed with multilingual professionals to assist in providing an inclusive healthcare experience to their clients. Staff are equipped to speak languages including but not limited to Spanish, Russian, Cantonese, Vietnamese, and Mandarin, etc. Sixty-five percent of Rosewood’s patients are Spanish-speaking. Virginia Garcia serves patients who speak 75 different languages. The executive director of Virginia Garcia states, “Our roots are in the Latino community and we’re born out of serving farmworkers,” “but I want all folks to feel welcome⁹.” As the Latinx Community continues to grow in Oregon, OCHA will keep equitable access to health services as of top

legislative priorities.

Supporting the Implementation of HB 4052

The Oregon Commission on Hispanic Affairs supports the implementation of House Bill 4052 (2022), which requires the Oregon Advocacy Commissions Office, in collaboration with culturally specific community-based organizations, to convene affinity group task forces consisting of leaders of Black and Indigenous communities, people of color, and members of the nine federally recognized tribes in Oregon. The task forces discuss and research the specific needs of the communities they represent and develop recommendations for specific allocations of resources to address the communities’ needs and improve health outcomes. A representative from OCHA serves on the Health Equity Advisory Leaders (HEAL) committee – which guides the OACO’s implementation of HB 4052. OCHA also shares policy recommendations for inclusion in the report which will be shared with the Legislative Assembly in November 2023.

OCHA'S LONG-TERM STRATEGIC FOCUS: OCFW: Domestic Violence

The Oregon Commission on Hispanic Affairs supports the implementation of House Bill 4052 (2022), which requires the Oregon Advocacy Commissions Office, in collaboration with culturally specific community-based organizations, to convene affinity group task forces consisting of leaders of Black and Indigenous communities, people of color, and members of the nine federally recognized tribes in Oregon. The task forces discuss and research the specific needs of the communities they represent and develop recommendations for specific allocations of resources to address the communities' needs and improve health outcomes. A representative from OCHA serves on the Health Equity Advisory Leaders (HEAL) committee – which guides the OACO's implementation of HB 4052. OCHA also shares policy recommendations for inclusion in the report which will be shared with the Legislative Assembly in November 2023.



OCHA'S LONG-TERM STRATEGIC FOCUS:

OCFW: Domestic Violence

Domestic Violence (DV) is a universal issue. Some would even call it a “taboo topic¹⁰”. Domestic Violence is not bound by age, race, gender, sexuality, or economic status. DV can harm anyone. Oregon Coalition Against Domestic & Sexual Violence define DV as, "a pattern of coercive and/or violent tactics perpetrated by one person against a family member or intimate partner, with the goal of establishing and maintaining power and control over that person¹¹."

The US Department of Justice identifies the different types of Domestic Violence:¹²

Physical Abuse: Hitting, slapping, shoving, grabbing, pinching, biting, hair pulling, etc. are types of physical abuse. This type of abuse also includes denying a partner medical care or forcing alcohol and/or drug use upon him or her.

Sexual Abuse: Coercing or attempting to coerce any sexual contact or behavior without consent. Sexual abuse includes, but is certainly not limited to, marital rape, attacks on sexual parts of the body, forcing sex after physical violence has occurred, or treating one in a sexually demeaning manner.

Emotional Abuse: Undermining an individual's sense of self-worth and/or self-esteem is abusive. This may include, but is not limited to constant criticism, diminishing one's abilities, name-calling, or damaging one's relationship with his or her children.

Economic Abuse: Controlling or restraining a person's ability to acquire, use, or maintain economic resources. This includes:

- using coercion, fraud, or manipulation to restrict access to finances or financial information;
- using economic resources without consent or exerting undue influence over financial decisions,
- exploiting powers of attorney, guardianship, or conservatorship against interest.

OCHA'S LONG-TERM STRATEGIC FOCUS: OCFW: Domestic Violence

Psychological Abuse: Elements of psychological abuse include - but are not limited to - causing fear by intimidation; threatening physical harm to self, partner, children, or partner's family or friends; destruction of pets and property; and forcing isolation from family, friends, or school and/or work.

Technological Abuse: An act or pattern of behavior that is intended to harm, threaten, control, stalk, harass, impersonate, exploit, extort, or monitor another person that occurs using any form of technology, including but not limited to: internet enabled devices, online spaces and platforms, computers, mobile devices, cameras and imaging programs, apps, location tracking devices, or communication technologies, or any other emerging technologies.

As the President of the “Women of the World” festival stated, “It is characterized by silence – silence from those that suffer – silence from those around them, and silence from those who perpetrate abuse. This silence is corrosive; it leaves women, children and men carrying the burden of shame. It prevents them from speaking out about the abuse and it prevents them from getting help. And at its worst it can be fatal¹⁰.”

DV is a dreadful reality for countless Oregonians. National Coalition Against Domestic Violence states, “39.8% of Oregon women and 36.2% of Oregon men experience intimate partner physical violence, intimate partner violence and/or intimate partner stalking in their lifetimes¹³.” OCHA has been partnering with the Oregon Commission for Women in a joint mission to combat DV. There are many misconceptions about DV, but its severity and the tragic aftermath can be understood in every culture. DV is not a partisan issue; it is a human issue. DV remains a forbidden or taboo topic in many cultures. This plays a part in perpetuating the silencing of survivors.

Without significant changes and a concerted effort from the state, DV will remain a significant social ill. While DV impacts all survivors and

OCHA'S LONG-TERM STRATEGIC FOCUS: OCFW: Domestic Violence

witnesses, the impact on children is life shattering with a cascade of negative externalities. OCHA will continue to press on this issue until it is a major priority for all Oregonians. The National Domestic Violence Hotline is available for use 24 hours a day. Here you are able to speak to a live advocate to help DV survivors navigate their options. Contact information: Call 1(800) 799- SAFE(7233) or text "Start" to 88788.

DV is a silent epidemic. In 2018, 128,786 calls for help were received by community based organizations and 8,414 requests for shelter could not be met by Oregon DV service (NCADV). The current structure of services relies on CBOs to advocate and help with these needs. Survivors are prioritizing support systems outside of the criminal justice system, making this issue one not as widely recognized in the public. However, during the pandemic, the reports of DV fell drastically. The general consensus counter this claim. The drop in reporting was due to cohabitation with abusers and the inability to report. OCFW is currently working on a report to show the increase in DV during the pandemic and how these incidents were handled by CBOs rather than by legal services. OCHA intends to continue to partner with OCFW.

OCHA'S LONG-TERM STRATEGIC FOCUS: Words from Commissioner Anglea Rico (OCFW)

The Oregon Commission for Women has historically been a strong voice for victims and survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking. OCFW acknowledges the fact that the pandemic created immense inequities. It created an environment where the previously available avenues for help to victims and survivors were limited and oftentimes shut down. In an effort to inform the Governor's office, the Oregon legislature, and all other interested parties, OCFW is undertaking a study into the effects that the pandemic had on these services.



Additionally to uncover what we need to do to remedy these deep issues created during the last few years, and some that have been there for a long time, but became even more deeply apparent during the last few years. We are still working on gathering the data, and creating both a quantitative and qualitative analysis of case loads, both in law enforcement and at district attorney offices, and that of community based providers. We are excited to share our findings in the hopes that we can fix what has been broken. We aspire to create enduring structures that will be permanently available to victims and survivors, regardless of their location or identity. We hope to partner with other government entities and community-based organizations to achieve this goal.

In prior years, passing legislation regarding domestic violence has been unsuccessful. In 2021, bills regarding emergency housing funds for victims (SB 271 A) and funding positions for DV specific government positions (HB 2754) failed. That same year, bills were passed that indirectly aided victims of domestic violence including SB 70 that requires Oregon Health Authority to consult regional health equity coalitions. Last year, no legislation regarding domestic violence was introduced. In 2023, 11 bills were introduced regarding domestic violence. This includes bills asking for mandatory DV training (SB 1029), researching DV in Oregon (SB 389, HB 2344), and funding for DV victim housing and projects (HB 3018, HB 2933). OCHA hopes these bills succeed over this session and efforts continue to combat DV in the next legislative session.

OCHA'S LONG-TERM STRATEGIC FOCUS: OCFW: Domestic Violence

Domestic Violence is a silent epidemic that needs to be cured. OCHA is partnering with OCFW among the other Oregon Advocacy Commissions (OACs) to put forward policy and legislation to combat DV in our state. The OACs are in partnership with state agencies and external groups in an effort to unite organizations and stop DV and its detrimental impact. OCHA is committed to continuing in efforts to eradicate this social ill from all communities..

2023 & 2024 Legislative Focus

HB 3126

Oregon Health Authority to promote timely delivery of behavioral health services to children who present to hospital emergency departments in behavioral health crises.

HB 2925

Extends deadlines for affinity group task forces to complete their work with respect to allocations of resources to address communities' needs and health inequities

HB 2955

Designates August 4th of each year as Bracero Program Day.

*2024, OCHA looks forward to pushing legislation that support mental and substance abuse in our community .

2023 Supported Legislative Bills

HB 2281

Requires school districts and public charter schools to designate civil rights coordinator.

HB 5001

Appropriates moneys from General Fund to Oregon Advocacy Commissions Office for biennial expenses.

SB 1052

Modifies crimes related to involuntary servitude and human trafficking.

HB 2957

Directs Department of Human Services to establish program to provide grants to assist noncitizens who do not possess valid immigration documentation change immigration status or obtain lawful permanent resident status.

HB 2950

Bars creditors' claims against decedents' estates if no petition for appointment of personal representative or small estate affidavit is filed within 18 months following decedent's date of death.

HB 2933

Appropriates moneys from General Fund to Department of Justice for deposit into Oregon Domestic and Sexual Violence Services Fund.

HB 3313

Authorizes Oregon Advocacy Commissions Office, Commission on Hispanic Affairs, Commission on Black Affairs, Commission for Women and Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs to employ paid interns and staff necessary to supervise interns.

SB 272

Provides that student who legally entered United States as refugee, through special immigrant visa or under Compact of Free Association treaty between United States and Republic of Palau, Republic of the Marshall Islands or Federated States of Micronesia and who has not previously established residence in any state or territory of United States other than Oregon qualifies for exemption from nonresident tuition and fees at Oregon Health and Science University.

2023 Supported Legislative Bills

SB 627

Appropriates moneys from General Fund to Oregon Department of Administrative Services for purposes of deposit in Universal Representation Fund.

HB 2005

Defines "undetectable firearm." Punishes manufacturing, importing, offering for sale or transferring undetectable firearm by maximum of 10 years' imprisonment, \$250,000 fine, or both.

HB 2006

Prohibits person under 21 years of age from possessing firearms with specified exceptions.

SB 911

Creates Commission for Original Peoples from South America, Central America and Mexico.

SB 2933

Appropriates moneys from General Fund to Department of Justice for deposit into Oregon Domestic and Sexual Violence Services Fund.

HB 2281

Requires school districts and public charter schools to designate civil rights coordinator. Prescribes duties of civil rights coordinator.

HB 2007

Authorizes governing bodies of certain public entities that own or control public building to adopt policy, ordinance or regulation or precluding affirmative defense for possession of firearms in public building and adjacent grounds by concealed handgun licensees.

HB 2955

Designates _____] August 4 of each year as Bracero Program Day. Declares emergency, effective on passage.

SB 704

Establishes Universal Health Plan Governance Board and directs board to create comprehensive plan for implementing Universal Health Plan .

2023 Supported Legislative Bills

HB 2925

Extends deadlines for affinity group task forces to complete their work with respect to allocations of resources to address communities' needs and health inequities faced by communities and to report recommendations to Legislative Assembly.

HB 3126

Establishes Emergency Behavioral Health Services for Children program in Oregon Health Authority to promote timely delivery of behavioral health services to children who present to hospital emergency departments in behavioral health crises.

HB 756

Requires school district employees assigned to work with students with specialized needs to have access to specified records related to students, to be consulted when education plan for student is reviewed or revised and to be provided with adequate training.

SB 1089

Establishes Universal Health Plan Governance Board. Specifies membership, powers and duties. Requires board to appoint executive director. Requires board to create comprehensive plan to finance and administer Universal Health Plan that meets specified requirements and is consistent with specified values and principles. Directs board to present comprehensive plan for implementation of Universal Health Plan to interim committees of Legislative Assembly related to health and to Governor no later than September 15, 2026. Declares emergency, effective on passage.

Report on The Bracero Program



(Visual Aid credit to Oregon Encyclopedia,
https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/bracero_program/#.ZBJzXOzMLAM, Ret. March 15, 2023)

April 2023

Bracero Program Legislative Report and Recommendations

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Legislative Directive

The Oregon Advocacy Commissions Office (OACO) administers four Governor appointed Commissions which serve underrepresented communities in Oregon, sharing their expertise and knowledge to inform state policy. One of the commissions that OACO supports is the Oregon Commission on Hispanic Affairs (OCHA). OCHA is a catalyst that empowers partnerships between the state government and Hispanic communities in rural and urban areas to ensure success for all Latino/a/x people by addressing issues at the policy level. Nina Gallo, a concerned Oregonian, contacted OCHA regarding the lack of acknowledgment of the Bracero program. OACO has been tasked with preparing a report and recommendations for use by the Legislature. The following report fulfills that directive.

Membership

Writing and Research:

Iyesha Rosser - Policy Research Analyst at the Oregon Advocacy Commissions Office

Grace Emhoff - Intern at the Oregon Advocacy Commissions Office

Sadie Lehman - Intern at the Oregon Advocacy Commissions Office

Executive Summary

The Bracero Program began in 1942 in response to the lack of American farm workers due to World War II. Mexico and the United States formed the Emergency Farm Labor Program to meet the agricultural needs of the United States and the employment needs of Mexico. Mexico would provide farm workers, called Braceros if the United States would provide adequate housing, food, health care, and wages. Instead, Braceros were met with discrimination, withholding of salaries, and the threat of deportation if they did not comply with farmers' demands.

Oregon's economy has greatly benefited from the exploited, underpaid labor of the Braceros. Since Braceros were working agricultural jobs, women were able to enter the workforce. In addition, farmers were able to keep more of their profit since they were not accountable to pay Braceros a livable wage. White Oregonians are choosing to ignore the mistreatment of Bracero throughout history. It is important to acknowledge the mistreatment of the Latino/a/x community in Oregon, celebrate their contributions, and right the wrongs.

OCHA is a government agency that empowers partnerships between the state government and Hispanic communities in rural and urban areas. In July 2022, OCHA was contacted by Nina Gallo, a concerned Oregonian, who believes the Bracero Program needs to be recognized as a state holiday. Based on the information gathered, OCHA recommends the Oregon Legislature consider:

1. A statewide recognized holiday to acknowledge the history of the Braceros.
2. The history and impact of the Bracero program be taught in schools around the state.
3. The Braceros or descendants of Braceros are to be paid for the labor provided to the United States.

By following these steps, Oregon can better recognize the history of our state and country.

Introduction and Background

On July 27, 2022, Nina Gallo contacted OCHA (see Appendix for full letter). As a concerned Oregonian, she believes that the Bracero Program needs to be recognized as a state holiday. The Emergency Farm Labor Supply Program, also known as the Bracero Program, began in 1942;

this program helped aid the United States during WWII. From the years 1942 to 1965, millions of Mexicans aided the U.S. while American men left to fight for their country.

The letter to OCHA states,

“Throughout our country’s history, the contributions of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) are consistently erased, from the genocide of Indigenous peoples who were stewards of the land before colonization to the failure to acknowledge that America was built on the backs of enslaved people, and the forgotten use of imported, cheap labor in the form of the Bracero Program. There is no doubt that Oregon benefited from this labor both economically and socially.”

“I believe that this appreciation needs to be revived and extended so we don’t forget who stepped up when Oregon desperately needed help. To have this recognition would mean that the contributions of past, present and future Hispanic Oregonians will not go unnoticed or be forgotten.”

- Ms. Gallo

OCHA is a catalyst that empowers partnerships between the state government and Hispanic

communities in rural and urban areas to ensure success for all Latino/a/x people by addressing

issues at the policy level. Our Statutory Goals and Strategic Priorities include:

- Advocate for fair policies assuring the success of Latino and Hispanic Oregonians at the state level.
- Engage state partners to promote equity for Latino/a/x statewide.
- Study and analyze issues affecting the Hispanic community statewide and recommend program remedies to state policymakers.
- Increase the viability and visibility of the contributions and achievements of Hispanic Oregonians statewide. ¹

¹ Oregon Advocacy Commission, “Oregon Commission on Hispanic Affairs (OCHA).”

I. History of the Program

The Bracero Program Overview

Assigned on August 4, 1942, the Bracero Program was established as a government-to-government temporary emergency measure. Due to World War II and the attack on Pearl Harbor, there was a labor shortage in the agricultural sector. The US identified itself as “a country in need of the talents of those outside our national frontiers.”² Meanwhile, Mexico experienced devastating drought and a lack of water and seeds in the years before World War II.

Mexico’s need for food and employment and the US’s lack of agricultural employment led to bilateral talks, thus forming the Emergency Farm Labor Program.⁴ In 1942, this agreement was supposed to take up to six months with guaranteed wages, health care, and adequate housing for the Braceros.⁵ Oregon State College (now known as Oregon State University) administered the Bracero federal program. Growers in the Pacific Northwest imported over 40,000 Bracero farmworkers, composing the first major wave of ethnic Mexicans who came to the region. Labor shortages in Oregon, especially the Hood River area, threatened Americans’ livelihoods by putting years of hard work and investments at stake. Mexican workers filled the labor shortage and harvested most of the crops during this time of economic disparity.⁶



The Braceros entered a world of intensely negative social living environments charged with discrimination and hate. The Bracero workers’ race took precedence over their quality of work, causing their helpfulness to be overlooked. Signs

reading “No Dogs, Negros, Mexicans” hung throughout the country. The U.S. government even censored all the Bracero workers’ communication.⁷

(Visual Aid credit to Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia.

<https://www.ferris.edu/jimcrow/what.htm>, Ret. March 17, 2023).

² Maria Elena Bickerton, “Prospects for Bilateral Immigration Agreement with Mexico: Lessons from the Bracero Program,” *Texas Law Review* [79], no. [4] (2001): 898.

³ Deborah Cohen, *Braceros: Migrant Citizens and Transnational Subjects in the Postwar United States and Mexico* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 2011).

Lilla Fernandez, “Of Immigrants and Migrants: Mexican and Puerto Rican Labor Migration in Comparative Perspective, 1942-1964,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* [29], no. [3], (2010): 51.

Elizabeth W. Mandeel, “The Bracero Program 1942-1964,” *American International Journal of Contemporary Research* [4], no. [1] (2014): 171-184.

Mario Jimenez Sifuentez, *Of Forest and Fields: Mexican Labor in the Pacific Northwest* (Rutgers University Press, 2016).

⁷ Erasmo Gamboa, *Mexican Labor & World War II: Braceros in the Pacific Northwest, 1942-1947* (University of Washington Press, 2000).

Treatment of the Braceros across the country varied. The Pacific Northwest gave Braceros a holistic discriminatory experience. The workers endured racially discriminatory attitudes from employers and local communities alike. From hospitals refusing to care for Braceros to being forbidden to enter certain businesses, communities did not welcome Braceros kindly.

“Not long thereafter, the camp manager at Medford, Oregon, reported that a Mexican national was attacked in public ‘without provocation’ and severely injured by five young men.” Idaho and Texas were blacklisted by the Mexican government for the mistreatment of Braceros, resulting in a PL-45.

“Prejudice became so common and deep-seated that in 1946 the Mexican government threatened to forbid its workers to go into the state and two years later made good on its threat.⁸”

Many issues arose from the implementation of the Bracero program such as illegal immigration, abuse of labor, and heightened labor injuries. Legislators passed several laws to improve the treatment of the Braceros, however, these issues contributed to the demise of the Bracero program in 1964. The legislative push for better treatment and wages prompted the establishment of the H-2A visa program.

Discrimination from Local Community

During this time, Mexican workers grew exponentially into mostly white, non-diverse rural neighborhoods of Oregon. They were discriminated against; racial slurs and segregated drinking fountains were common across the state. Sometimes, Bracero workers were even forced to remain on the farm base.⁹

Braceros were discriminated against on and off the farm. Some growers built segregated worker camps: one for whites, one for blacks, and one for Mexicans. The concessionaire’s profits are derived from the difference between what the grower could charge the Braceros and the expenses to provide food. The cheaper the food provided to eat, the more profit he was able to make. For example, in 1943, in Grants Pass, Oregon, 500 Braceros suffered food poisoning from poor-quality food, one of the most severe cases reported in the Northwest. The Mexican government intervened in 1945 because of the poor quality of food.¹⁰

Physical labor had the most debilitating long-term effects. Farmers forced Braceros to use the “*cortito*,” or short hoe; which is now illegal. To effectively use the short hoe, you must bend over, or stoop, constantly. Using this tool caused substantial damage to the workers’ bodies. Farmers also assigned Braceros to operate heavy machinery, which was against the federal agreement.¹¹

⁸ Gamboa, *Mexican Labor & World War II*.

⁹ Gamboa, *Mexican Labor & World War II*.

¹⁰ Robert Bauman, “Jim Crow in the Tri-Cities, 1943-1950,” *The Pacific Northwest Quarterly* [91], no. [3] (2005):

125.

¹¹ Sifuentez, *Of Forest and Fields*.

The Reaction to Unionization

Unions were formed to address the issues like wages, living conditions, and injuries of the Bracero and Mexican farmworkers. Cesar E. Chavez and Dolores Huerta helped Braceros find power in their voices. Chavez and Huerta founded The National Farm Workers Association (NFWA) around the premise that the farmworkers' struggle was part of a much broader movement for civil rights. The ongoing Black Freedom Struggle provided both inspiration and allies to farmworkers, drawing parallels between the Jim Crow South and rural California in the fight for racial justice.

Latino/a/x people worked with the state of Oregon to create their own Oregon's Pineros Y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste (PCUN) as a union for farm workers in 1985. Their mission was to gain collective bargaining rights. PCUN continues to advocate and work hard for Mexican residents in Oregon.

The efforts of the NFWA and PCUN unions brought forth action to all Braceros across the U.S. NFWA led a series of marches, national consumer boycotts, and fasts to protest working conditions. NFWA attracted national headlines and gained labor contracts with higher wages and improved working conditions, galvanizing the Chicano movement.

Strikes

The treatment of the Bracero population finally exploded into full-blown strikes. Strikes took place all across America. Topics that raised awareness included:

1. Housing and food being substandard
2. Contracts often violated
3. Prevalent violence
4. Length of workdays

Braceros found ways to resist their employers and attempt to improve living conditions and wages in the Pacific Northwest work camps. One common method used to increase their wages was "loading sacks" which consisted of filling their harvest bags with rocks to make their bags heavier.¹² Over two dozen strikes were held in the first two years of the program; this allowed Braceros in the Pacific Northwest to receive better wages, food, and housing.

Differences Between Laborers in the Pacific Northwest and the South

Treatment both on and off the farm impacted the Braceros' lives greatly. Most Braceros did not know the locations they were going to when they entered the United States. Oregon was one of the further states from Mexico and the cold climate took some adjustment. Southern states took on the brunt of these Bracero agreements and benefited greatly. However, during this time, the political and racial climates were at an all-time high and most southern states were

¹² Sifuentez, *Of Forest and Fields*.

pro-segregation. Braceros received similar horrible treatment to that of Blacks and other non-white races.¹³ For instance, in the early years of the program, Mexico objected to Texas being included in the program, citing the state's notorious racism against Mexican nationals, but was dissuaded after 1946. Mexico also wanted to exclude Idaho since the state approved rules forcing *braceros* to stay at their assigned job or face arrest and provide "forced, unpaid labor while awaiting trial."¹⁴

II. Impact on Workers and Their Families

Separation

The legal length agreed upon for the Bracero program was six weeks to six months. However, many Braceros who traveled farther north stayed longer to maximize their earnings. Sometimes staying in the U.S. for 4-6 years at a time. This long period away from family brought much turmoil to the Bracero households. Some Braceros returned while others did not.¹⁵

Braceros who stayed in the U.S. left their loved ones behind for decades. Braceros searched for ways to save their earnings to support their families. In the US, they worked hard to find a home for themselves. The only way to communicate their intentions for their families' futures was through the mail. The government destroyed any letters expressing unfair working conditions and emotional or sexual desires. The government feared permanent settlement of Bracero families in the US, as the program was designed as a temporary workforce that would be returned back to Mexico.¹⁶

Bracero's prospective in-laws were wary of men who had a history of abandoning their families in Mexico in hopes of good wages in the U.S. As a result, Bracero men who wished to marry had to repress their longing. Braceros had to demonstrate they could show strength in emotional aspects, worthy of their future spouses. It was frowned upon for women to voice their concerns about the stability of their relationships. Especially, when they spoke of their sexual and emotional desires, as it was deemed socially, religiously, and culturally inappropriate.¹⁷

Withholding of Salaries

Farmers led Braceros astray when it came to their pay. Farmers used deductions and other means to withhold Bracero's pre-negotiated federal wages. Bracero's wage schedules changed frequently to provide employers with increased profit. This practice happened so often that many Braceros

¹³ Sifuentez, *Of Forest and Fields*.

¹⁴ Dallas Morning News, "Bracero Timeline," 2002.

¹⁵ Lawrence A. Cardoso, "Floodtide of the 1920s," *Mexican Emigration to the United States, 1897-1931*. University of Arizona, 2019): 71-95.

¹⁶ Cardoso, *Mexican Emigration to the United States, 1897-1931*.

¹⁷ Gamboa, *Mexican Labor & World War II*.

did not know how much they would be paid. On the most labor-intensive days, the pay was worse and at a piece rate.

Types of illegal deductions Braceros were forced to pay:

1. \$1.75 was supposed to come out of pay every day for food provided at cost, however, the money could be kept if the workers cooked their own food.
2. Workers who opposed or questioned farmers were sent back to Mexico.¹⁸
3. Workers were forced to have additional insurance and the cost would come out of pay, however, the money would go directly to growers, and no insurance was given.¹⁹
4. Between 1953 and 1958, workers in the far mind us try increased by 14 percent, but Bracero workers' wages had either decreased or stayed the same.²⁰
5. In 1952, illegal deductions were taken out of California Bracero's pay.²¹
6. During the program, Mexico withheld 10% of Bracero's pay for "savings" but in reality, the government sent that money to a Mexican bank to hold and never gave to the Braceros.²²

In the agreement with the Mexican government, ten percent of the wages earned by Braceros must be put into savings schemes, to be deposited into Mexican banks and withdrawn upon their return. But the Braceros never received this money. Later, reparations were made to the Bracero workers and the Mexican government, however, millions of dollars went unnoticed, were never accounted for, and never paid to the Braceros and their families.²³

Deportation

Farmers used deportation as a means of control and forced Braceros to perform their tasks. If they resisted, deportation was threatened. Even when Braceros completed their tasks, farmers would call the authorities to have them deported. This unfair practice granted farmers free labor while keeping the Bracero in constant fear.

Coined in 1920, "wetback" was a derogatory term to describe a Mexican citizen crossing the Rio Grande River illegally into the US for a job. These migrants were also taken advantage of for farm labor, a practice still common today. Farmers, growers, and Border Patrol would round up the migrants, take them to a processing center, and force them to reach a toe across the border to Mexico before legalizing their Bracero status in the US. This process was referred to as "drying out," which enabled growers to acquire farmworkers. In the fiscal year of 1950, only 19,813 Braceros were admitted while 96,239 migrants were "dried out" and turned into Braceros.²⁴

¹⁸ Ana Elizabeth Rosas, "Breaking the Silence: Mexican Children and Women's Confrontation of Bracero Family Separation, 1942-64," *Gender & History* [23], no. [2] (2011).

¹⁹ Ernesto Galarza, *Strangers in Our Fields*, (Joint United States-Mexico Trade Union Committee, 1956).

²⁰ Don Mitchell, *They Saved the Crops*, (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2012).

²¹ Mitchell, *They Saved the Crops*.

²² Gloria Ibanez, "Mexico Withheld 10 Percent of Bracero's Salary; Braceros Want it Back," *Yakima Herald-Republic* (2017).

²³ Gilbert Gonzalez, *Harvest of Loneliness*, Film, directed by: Vivan Price & Adrian Salinas (2010, New York, NY: Films Media Group), DVD.

²⁴ Ernesto Galarza, *Merchants of Labor: The Mexican Bracero Story*, (San Jose, California, McNally & Loftin, 1964).

III. Impact on the Local Economy

Positive Impacts During World War II

This agreement positively affected the US, providing countless women and children with food. Farmers profited greatly from the Braceros since they had helped maintain large acres of crops. This program offered an excess number of workers, high profits with low wages, and a stable economy. “The Bracero men provided a stable and reliable workforce that farmers counted on.”²⁵

World War II granted women access to the workforce, which helped women to be seen as more than homemakers, fueling the women’s liberation movement. Women entered the workforce to earn money to sustain their households. They learned trades and crafts that were previously unavailable to them. Household gender roles evolved during this time and brought about the notion of the two-income household that remains today.

Suppression of Bracero’s Wages Post-War

Wage suppression persisted post-WWII. Returning American soldiers from World War II were expected to return to their previously held jobs. When they returned, they worked alongside the Braceros. Before the war, farmworkers made minimum wage. Post-war, Braceros were making cents on the dollar. Descendants of Braceros and the Latino/a/x community continue to be exploited and capitalized on today. The Bracero program set the precedent for the abuse of Hispanic guest workers, whose wages decreased between 2004 and 2014.²⁶

The Continuation of the Program and the Aftermath

“After 1946- As soon as the government turned the responsibility for recruitment over to the employers, guest workers were exploited and abused.”²⁷”

In response to American soldiers coming home, farmers stopped keeping proper records and continued to pay Branceros unlivable wages. This led to the notable disappearance of Braceros. Although the program officially ended in 1965, the need for work remained. The Mexican population still depended on the wages they received from the US. The dire need for work created massive surges of legal and undocumented migration to the US and persists today.

“Under pressure from the agricultural lobby, the US government extended it until 1949, maintaining the broad outlines of the program, but with key changes in its administration.”²⁸”
After 1946, while the Bracero Program continued apace, undocumented immigrant numbers skyrocketed. Eager growers took advantage of available workers to whom no safeguards nor

²⁵ Galarza, *Merchants of Labor*.

²⁶ Daniel Costa. “The H-2B Temporary Foreign Worker Program,” *Economic Policy Institute* (2016).

²⁷ Aili Palmnen, “Learning From the Mistakes of the Past: An Analysis of Past and Current Temporary Workers Policies and Their Implication for a Twenty-First Century Guest-Worker Program,” *Kennedy School Review* [6] (2005).

²⁸ Aili Palmnen, “Learning From the Mistakes of the Past: An Analysis of Past and Current Temporary Workers Policies and Their Implication for a Twenty-First Century Guest-Worker Program.”

conditions applied. The influx of undocumented immigrants in the 1970 census reported: “70 percent of 105,000 ‘Hispanic origin’ residents in Washington and Oregon lived in the urban areas. Eighty-six percent of Mexicans lived in only twenty-two counties in the Northwest, and the majority of those were located along the Interstate-5 corridor.”²⁹ Laws such as Public Law 78, H.R. 5678 Bill, and the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 led to the establishment of the H-2A visa program.

Continue Suppression of Wages for Migrant Farm Workers

As undocumented immigrants continue to surface in the US, they were only allowed to get “under-the-table jobs” that allowed an employer to pay someone off the record. “Workers live in constant fear of deportation; thus, they cannot complain about working conditions, contract violations, poor housing, or wage theft.”³⁰ Employers receive maximum labor for a fraction of the cost. They also force undocumented immigrants, guest workers, and the Latino/a/x community into involuntary servitude. This unjust and inhumane power dynamic is how this treatment has persisted for over eighty years. “Former Department of Labor official Lee G. Williams called the Bracero Program ‘legalized slavery.’³¹”

IV. Current Impact

Farmer Worker Overtime Passed 2022

In the Short Session 2022, Oregon passed House Bill 4002 Agriculture Overtime. Which put a “walk-back” model to address overtime pay in Oregon and Washington. The “Walk Back” model starts at a higher overtime threshold and then decreases each year. This includes a 1–2-year deduction starting at 55 hours strict overtime threshold in 2022. It will gradually decrease to a 40-hour threshold by 2027. California has already firmly placed a 40-hour strict overtime threshold for their agriculture sector. Other states such as Minnesota, Colorado, New York, Maryland, and Hawaii have all placed overtime thresholds in their agriculture sectors as well, ranging in hour threshold. All other states have yet to put strict laws surrounding agricultural labor. Strict laws holding state farmers accountable are needed to stop this mass profit structure.

Inequitable Treatment of the Latino/a/x Community

As of 2021, approximately 37.24 million Mexican descendants are living in the US; this makes Latino/a/x Americans the largest ethnic minority of 18.7% in the US.³² Hatred towards the Latino/a/x community grew substantially as former US President Donald Trump targeted Mexicans during his presidential campaign kickoff rally on June 16, 2015, at the Trump Tower in New York City, NY. The former president stated, “When Mexico sends its people, they're not

²⁹ Sifuentez, Of Forest and

³⁰ Sifuentez, Of Forest and

³¹ Sifuentez, Of Forest and

³² Pew Research Center, 2022.

sending their best... They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists. And some, I assume, are good people.”

The Latino/a/x population feels it is getting harder to remain in America. “When it comes to living in the U.S., a majority (54%) says it has become more difficult to live in the country as a Latino in recent years, while 42% say things haven’t changed much.³³”

Calling the Latino/a/x community derogatory names and spreading hate speech deepened the divide between the Latino/a/x community and other communities.

Ms. Gallo outlined the lack of awareness and appreciation for the Braceros in her letter to OCHA,

stating:

“There is no doubt that Oregon benefited from this labor both economically and socially, and yet, I have had an incredibly hard time finding any kind of recognition towards the workers from the state of Oregon besides a letter from former Oregon Governor Earl Snell to the Mexican government in 1943 which expressed his gratitude. I believe that this appreciation needs to be revived and extended so we don’t forget who stepped up when Oregon desperately needed help”

(Ms. Gallo).

We concur that by making it a holiday, all people will be able to learn the history of the Braceros. The Bracero Program has been forgotten and that needs to stop today! It is time for us to pay homage to the Braceros and their contributions to the United States and especially in Oregon.

Negative White Oregonian Action

Oregon has failed to acknowledge the Braceros and the work that they have done. White Oregonians choosing to ignore the truth of Braceros demonstrates the continued discrimination against these populations. U.S. history tends to omit the actions of hate, racism, or murder that our country has committed. Oregonians need to be aware of the harm that they continue to play in the inhumane treatment of the Latino/a/x population. It is time for Oregon to take ownership and acknowledge its full history, no matter how ugly it is. Oregon cannot continue to be in the business of erasing history, but rather amplifying the truth and righting its wrongs. This is why Oregon must take this stand to support making it a state holiday. Bracero's history is a part of American history.

³³ Pew Research Center, 2022.

Recommendations

1. Passing House Bill 2955 (2023) Designating August 4th as Bracero Program Day

As the heartfelt letter from Ms. Gallo stated,

“Although the Braceros worked tirelessly to provide crops to the state, the worker’s inadequate living conditions and substandard pay did not reflect any appreciation for their efforts. Without the assistance of Mexican workers, Oregon farms would have been left struggling to harvest and pick produce to feed the state, which continues to make up one of Oregon’s largest industries. It’s only fair that the Braceros be recognized for the work that they did and the sacrifices they made for Oregon.”

This is a simple request that needs to be reconciled. As Ms. Gallo has stated, “recognition” is what we ask for. The time is now to act for a community that has been silenced. Make the Bracero Program a state holiday. We call for the Braceros holiday to be held on the 4th of August since that is the day the program was introduced in 1942.

2. Call for Teaching Bracero History in Classrooms throughout Oregon

History lives on if it’s shared through generations. There are states like California that have passed a law (SB-993) that authorizes schools to teach the Bracero program. With this curriculum, no Latino/a/x child nor Bracero descendant will miss out on a critical part of their ancestor’s stories. This will also allow other students and teachers alike to be educated more diversely in the heritage of the Latino/a/x community.

3. Intergovernmental Agreement with Mexico to Repay Braceros Their 10% Withholds.

In 2001, Braceros filed a lawsuit against the governments of the United States and Mexico and Wells Fargo Bank. The Braceros would deposit money into banks in the United States, largely Wells Fargo. Then the money would be transferred to a Mexican bank, largely Banco Rural de Credito National (BanRural). There was no interest made on this money until the Braceros returned to Mexico to claim it. The lawsuit began when Wells Fargo announced that they did not deposit all the money from paychecks. Wells Fargo and BanRural claimed that 10% of Bracero’s paychecks were lost in the transition of funds.³⁴

³⁴ Ibanez, “Mexico Withheld 10 Percent of Bracero’s Salary; Braceros Want it Back,” 2017.

Mexican bank, BanRural, was found to be using Bracero's paychecks to pay for day-to-day bank operations. In addition, many Braceros never returned to Mexico, therefore never receiving payment. If Braceros did move back to Mexico, BanRural would frequently deny having the funds at all. Others were not aware funds were being held for them in Mexico. Some experts report the wages owed, including interest, are more than 500 million dollars (in American currency).

When the lawsuit was taken to the United States courts, U.S. District Judge Charles Breyer threw it out because the statute of limitations had expired. Braceros in Mexico and the United States began to protest this ruling. In response, the Mexican government promised 300 million pesos (roughly 26.5 million in American currency). To receive this money, Braceros must work through the bureaucratic system of the government and produce five to eight means of identification. The committee of people that decided who would get reparations was made up of government officials and representatives from BanRural, which made this process very biased. There has been no more movement for reparations since the early 2000s in the United States.³⁵

Since technically these funds are on Wells Fargo and BanRural, it cannot fall on the State of Oregon to take on that financial burden. That being said, we propose the State of Oregon enforce these companies to repay what they have taken away from the Braceros.

United States House of Representatives has only introduced one bill and two resolutions in response to the Bracero program. 107 House Resolution 522 and 110 House Resolution 696, both expressed gratitude for the contributions the Braceros made to the United States' WWII efforts. Both Resolutions failed to provide or suggest any repayment or action steps to right the injustices Braceros have faced.

The closest the United States government got justice was 107 H.R. 4918, also called the Braceros Justice Act of 2002. Which waived certain defenses to claims brought by Braceros against the United States, Mexico, BanRural, and Wells Fargo regarding the failure to pay the Braceros in full. 107 H.R. 4918 would have waived the statute of limitations, allowing claims to be brought 2 years after the bill was passed. This would have applied to any district court in the United States and would waive the United States' Sovereign Immunity. Unfortunately, this bill never progressed past the introduction phase in the U.S. House of Representatives.

³⁵ Jennifer Osorio. "Proof of a Life Lived: The Plight of the Braceros and What it Says About How We Treat Records," *Archival Issues* [29] no. [2] (2005): 95-103.

Conclusion

The Bracero program played a vital role in keeping our economy afloat during World War II. The Braceros put the U.S. in a position to thrive and become one of the wealthiest nations it is today. The U.S.'s long history has always highlighted our country's triumphs while neglecting the inhuman portions. Oregon, along with the rest of the country, needs to acknowledge the wrong that we have done and are still doing to profit off Braceros and the Latino/a/x community. It is pertinent that Oregon takes the right steps to expose its oppressive culture. Students need to be taught all sides of the story and recognize the harm that occurred and recognize the harms we still commit today. Righting these wrongs starts with teaching ourselves about the contributions of the Latino/a/x communities. A good way to start this process is by giving appreciation to the Bracero Program and its participants via a State Holiday, educating the history of the Braceros in schools, and repaying the withholdings that were never returned.

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Appendix

Dear Melina Moran,

I am writing this letter because I would like you and the Oregon Commission on Hispanic Affairs (OCHA) to honor the Mexican workers of the Emergency Farm Labor Supply Program, more commonly known as the Bracero Program, by establishing a commemorative holiday to acknowledge the contributions of the Bracero workers and their families to Oregon agriculture and history. Between 1942 and 1947, thousands of hardworking Mexican men were sent to Oregon to work in the fields due to a shortage of farmhands during World War II. During this period, the Braceros performed backbreaking labor, harvesting sugar beets, potatoes, and many other vital crops. In the photo to the left, a man is using a picking belt, a harvesting tool in which a sack is fastened to the belt and dragged between the legs to hold crops. Although the Braceros worked tirelessly to provide crops to the state, the worker's inadequate living conditions and substandard pay did not reflect any appreciation for their efforts.



provide crops to the state, the worker's inadequate living conditions and substandard pay did not reflect any appreciation for their efforts. In many cities, the Braceros were met with racist attitudes and sometimes physical violence. In Medford, OR a Mexican national was brutally attacked by five men, and although the national was the one met with violence, it was he who was arrested. Acts of violence such as this demonstrate that although the Braceros were feeding the state of Oregon, they were still not respected and subjected to racism and life-threatening injustices. Without the assistance of Mexican workers, Oregon farms would have been left struggling to harvest and pick produce to feed the state, which continues to make up one of Oregon's largest industries. It's only fair that the Braceros be recognized for the work that they did and the sacrifices they made for Oregon.

Throughout our country's history, the contributions of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) are consistently erased, from the genocide of Indigenous peoples who were stewards of the land before colonization, the failure to acknowledge that America was built on the backs of enslaved peoples, and the forgotten use of imported, cheap labor in the form of the Bracero Program. There is no doubt that Oregon benefited from this labor both economically and socially, and yet, I have had an incredibly hard time finding any kind of recognition towards the workers from the State of Oregon besides a letter from former Oregon Governor Earl Snell to the Mexican government in 1943 which expressed his gratitude. I believe that this appreciation needs to be revived and extended so we don't forget who stepped up when Oregon desperately needed help.

On the OCHA webpage, it mentions one of OCHA's principles and values as being, "Celebration of and awareness about the contributions and achievements of Hispanic Oregonians" and as the chair of the Oregon Commission on Hispanic Affairs, I believe that you and your commission have a duty to recognize the work performed by the Braceros. Although many of the workers returned to Mexico after their contracts were up, some became permanent residents of Oregon.

Regardless, I believe that all of the Braceros who came here to work have a place in our community of Hispanic Oregonians. The presence of the Braceros helped Oregon thrive during a time of great need, and not only that, but the Bracero program itself brought a new diaspora to Oregon, further enriching the state with Mexican culture, customs, and the Spanish language. Even today, many Oregon farmworkers identify as being Latinx/Hispanic. In your position of power, you have the ability to emphasize and uplift the contributions made by the Braceros and to illustrate how Oregon does not forget the efforts made by people of color, especially in a state that has historically denied the rights of BIPOC.

I hope that this letter implores you and your committee to explore the possibilities of establishing a commemorative holiday to honor the Braceros. To have this recognition would mean that the contributions of past, present and future Hispanic Oregonians will not go unnoticed or be forgotten. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Nina Gallo

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Conclusion

BIENNIUM REPORT

The Oregon Commission on Hispanic Affairs is proud to serve and uplift the 14.1% of the population that represents our greater community here in Oregon. OCHA is the nexus between the Hispanic Community and state government. During the last two years, our Commission has had many highlights including the transition of our State Representative Commissioner, Andrea Salinas from the State Legislature to the halls of the United States Congress. She is the inaugural representative for the new Sixth District of Oregon. OCHA congratulates Representative Andrea Salinas in her new role.

As we exit the pandemic, OCHA strives to re-engage with community and continue to develop more frequent interactions and listening sessions to help inform you, the leaders of the state. OCHA remains focused on healthcare generally and specifically with Mental Health and Domestic Violence with a focus on rural communities, highlighting the inequities for rural communities and Hispanic communities. OCHA looks forward to supporting access to robust healthcare with a focus on behavioral health services and continued input from community members in health equity projects, like the on-going HB 4052 (2022) efforts.

OCHA hopes to see the recognition and acknowledgement of the Braceros in a new state holiday and education campaign through HB 2955. OCHA hopes that it comes to fruition in the 2023 legislative session. OCHA will continue to share the voices of community, uplift the contributions of community both past and present, and assist the state government in amending, correcting, and repairing the past and present inequities for all Oregonians. OCHA thanks the State of Oregon for its continued support and recognition of our community. We look forward to continued partnership and support. Thank you.



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Thank You!



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