

*The North Carolina Congress of Latino Organizations is a nonpartisan statewide membership-led, grassroots organization that builds power with Latino working families to advance social, racial and economic justice for all. Through grassroots campaigns, leadership development, advocacy and civic engagement, we work to create a North Carolina in which every person enjoys equal rights, opportunities and protections.*



## REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY, 2019-2020

### SETTING OUR AGENDA

As always, our work over the past two years was inspired and guided by the experiences, needs, frustration, imagination, and hopes of Latino immigrants and their families across North Carolina. In 2019, we trained hundreds of leaders to facilitate simultaneous listening sessions to discover new leaders and identify and prioritize specific issues affecting quality of life in their communities. These leaders then engaged a total of **3,500 Latinos** in small-group conversations across the state to shape our collective agenda. Priorities identified through our listening sessions included:

- Defending the status of DACA and TPS holders,
- Increasing the number of bilingual interpreters and staff at public schools, clinics, social service agencies, and hospitals,
- Stopping the separation of families by ICE, and
- Increasing access to quality affordable housing.



*Leaders participated in trainings on how to facilitate listening sessions in the Fall of 2019.*

## STATEWIDE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

### *Organizing with DACA, TPS, and DED recipients*



*Statewide planning meeting, July 2019*

In 2019, the NC Congress of Latino Organizations played a leading role in organizing around the needs of 64,500 North Carolinians protected by DACA, TPS, and DED immigration programs, many of whom belong to our network.

Leaders of **50+ Latino organizations** from across the state gathered to develop and ratify a common strategy for addressing the needs of DACA, TPS, and DED holders. The NCCLO held a statewide press conference to announce our plan, which included demanding that the NC Attorney General defend DACA,

talking with legislators at the federal level, holding candidate forums, educating 90,000 Latinos about the campaign, and launching a non-partisan campaign to promote the Latino vote in 2020 (see media coverage in the [Winston-Salem Journal](#)).



*NCCLO leaders from across the state hold a press conference at Iglesia Cristiana Sin Fronteras, July 2019.*

**300 Latinos** from different corners of the state also traveled to Washington, D.C. to help educate diverse members of Congress about the needs of those immigrants with DACA, TPS, and DED status, and to witness the bipartisan vote of the US House of Representatives on the Dream and Promise Act.

Young DACA holders connected with the NC Congress of Latino Organizations met with the Attorney General Josh Stein to share their personal stories. During the meeting the leaders gained his commitment to sue the Trump administration in defense of 27,000 DACA holders who call North Carolina home. In June of 2020, the US Supreme Court voted to keep the DACA program.

*NC Congress of Latino Organizations members traveled to Washington, D.C. in June & September of 2019 to help educate diverse members of Congress about the needs of those immigrants with DACA, TPS, and DED status.*



### ***Holding state government accountable on health, education, housing, immigrant rights, and protections for essential workers***

Governor Roy Cooper and Attorney General Josh Stein attended a public accountability meeting with close to 1,000 leaders from the NC Congress of Latino Organizations. Both decision makers had made promises to 1,400 of our Delegates as they were running for office. Held on August 13, 2020, the NCCLLO Delegates' Assembly was attended by close to 1,000 Latinos and allies, as reported in [Enlace Latino](#), the [Raleigh News & Observer](#), and the [Chatham News & Record](#), among others. Cooper and Stein reported on the promises they made as candidates in 2016 before reacting to the NCCLLO Priority Agenda, developed with the input of over 3,500 Latinos who participated in listening sessions. Governor Cooper and Attorney General Stein announced they kept the following promises:

## Governor:

- Improved access to health care for Latino families by appointing an attorney to oversee Title VI regulations and requiring that insurance companies deliver culturally and linguistically appropriate services as part of the \$30 billion Medicaid transformation.
- Vetoed harmful legislation that would have deputized Sheriffs as ICE agents.
- Reinstated the Latino/Hispanic Advisory Council to the Governor.



*Screenshot from the NCCLLO Delegates' Assembly with the NC Governor and Attorney General on August 13, 2020.*

## Attorney General:

- Participated in successful legal action in defense of DACA.
- Represented Latino families living at mobile home parks in negotiations with abusive landlords.

Cooper and Stein also responded to the NCCLLO Priority Agenda. Key pledges included the following:

- **Governor Cooper and Attorney General Stein pledged to convene a meeting with the NCCLLO and housing experts** to address problems impacting Latino residents of mobile home parks.
- **The Governor promised to fight for funding to hire bilingual counselors, nurses and interpreters at public schools.** He also pledged to increase diversity in NC's educational workforce and work to eliminate the arbitrary funding cap for English Language Learner programs.
- **Attorney General Stein pledged to bring a new challenge to the recent changes the Trump administration made to DACA,** the Obama-era program that shields certain undocumented immigrants who came to the US as children from deportation.
- **The Attorney General also promised to join other Attorneys General in taking legal action against public charge rules and arrests of immigrants at courthouses** without a warrant.

The Governor and Secretary of Health, Dr. Mandy Cohen, and their staffs subsequently met with representatives from farmworker advocacy groups and the NCCLLO to discuss how to protect Latino essential workers from COVID-19, especially on farms and in meat-packing plants. They committed to:

- **Create an emergency fund** to help farmworkers with COVID-19 related needs,
- **Send a letter from the Attorney General affirming farmworkers' rights to receive visits from public health professionals** at their migrant labor camps. The letter was sent to the Department of Health and Human Services, which circulated English and Spanish versions to growers,
- **Require greater transparency in reporting of cases by occupation,** and
- **Improve the accessibility of testing** and conduct proactive planning and testing of workers in 11 agricultural counties to prevent infections.

## LOCAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

### *Bilingual Staff at Public Schools*

The NCCLLO in Durham County [turned out 350 leaders for a public meeting with School Board candidates](#), during which they secured commitments to **create a new immigrant outreach department, hire two bilingual counselors, and develop a strategic plan to increase academic achievement** among Latino students. They also engaged the Superintendent and County Commissioners to secure funds for an **additional interpreter in the Durham Public Schools**.



*Candidates for the Durham School Board respond to questions at a meeting attended by 350 Latinos.*



*NCCLLO and Orange County Justice United campaign for greater diversity in Orange County Schools staff, May 2019.*

In partnership with Orange County Justice United, NCCLLO leaders in Orange County [preserved an elementary school Spanish program and successfully urged the School Board to hire bilingual outreach coordinators](#) in all six elementary schools. They also celebrated a **four-fold increase in hiring of teachers of color** as a result of their two-year campaign.

In Forsyth County, Latino leaders met with top school district staff and Board members and held a [250-parent press conference](#) highlighting testimonies about the need for more bilingual personnel [[article in Spanish](#)]. In response, Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools:

- **Hired two additional full-time interpreters,**
- **Hired three bilingual, community-based employees** to assist families with educational needs and connection to social services during the COVID-19 pandemic, and
- **Began offering Spanish interpretation at all School Board meetings.**



*Forsyth County NCCLLO leaders met in February 2020 to compile the results of listening sessions that engaged 500 Latino parents and students.*

Forsyth County NCCLLO leaders were joined by WS/FCS staff to share these commitments with the public in a virtual press conference in December 2020, as reported by the [Winston-Salem Journal](#), [Triad City Beat](#), [Qué Pasa Greensboro-Winston-Salem](#), and [Mía Magazine](#).

## Halting Family Separation by ICE

NCCLLO chapters held public meetings with candidates for Sheriff in five counties attended by **2,277 leaders**. All five counties **elected Sheriffs that announced they would not collaborate with ICE** in separating families, and that they would end existing 287(g) agreements (under which deputies previously held individuals in jail to allow ICE to assume custody of them). Sheriffs in Mecklenburg and Wake Counties also created **new community engagement units** to work with immigrant families.



NCCLLO leaders celebrate agreements reached with Mecklenburg Sheriff Gary McFadden in February 2019, as reported by [WBTV](#) and [WSOCTV](#).



Wake County Sheriff Gerald Baker takes questions from NCCLLO leaders at a public meeting in March 2019, as reported in [The State](#) and [Enlace Latino](#).

In Forsyth County, NCCLLO leaders also worked with the Winston-Salem Police Chief to **extend the time period during which victims of crime may apply for a U Visa**. These visas protect immigrants who suffer trauma as victims of specific crimes and collaborate with law enforcement. At a public action attended by **450 leaders**, Police Chief Catrina Thompson announced that the department would extend the application period from two years to four years beginning in 2019, and to five years in 2021. She also committed to increase the number of bilingual police officers trained in cultural sensitivity.



NCCLLO members provide Winston-Salem Police Chief Catrina Thompson with an interpretation headset at a public meeting.



450 NCCLLO leaders turned out to meet with the Winston-Salem Police Chief and Forsyth County Sheriff-Elect at a public accountability meeting in Nov 2018.

## ***Increasing Access to Decent and Affordable Housing***

In Wake County, the NCCLLO organized 280 families from a mobile home park to preserve their homes and secure other reforms to ensure decent and affordable housing. As a result of a public action with over 200 people and multiple follow-up meetings:



*Wake County clergy and leaders preparing for a public action on decent and affordable housing, February 2020.*

- The Department of Transportation agreed on a **road-widening plan that prevented displacement** of all families.
- The park owner agreed to **provide mailboxes** (a federal right) and to **\$40,000 in rent reductions and elimination of penalties** for families facing economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. The owner also **guaranteed contracts for nearly 300 families**.



*Public action organized by NCCLLO leaders in Wake County to negotiate with the mobile home park owner and the NCDOT.*

Working in partnership with our sister organization, ONE Wake, the NCCLLO also [worked for](#) and [won \\$12 million in rental assistance and eviction prevention](#) available to undocumented families.

In Orange County, the NCCLLO supported **125 families** living in three mobile home parks as they organized their communities to address serious concerns in park conditions and excessive rent hikes, fees, and fines. Together they have won commitments for:

- **Siting of two new wells** and repair of malfunctioning pumps,
- **Repair or replacement of failing septic tanks,**
- **Over \$30,000 in forgiven penalties,** and
- **More timely repairs,** a regular meeting schedule with regional managers, and an after-hours number for emergency maintenance needs.

## ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION

NCCLLO leaders from across the state joined forces to engage new and infrequent Latino voters in the 2020 general elections, which ultimately contributed to a [40% increase in Latino turnout](#) compared to 2016. The “Our Vote, Our Power” campaign launched with a [press conference in September 2020](#). Speakers highlighted issues affecting Latino communities -- immigration reform, housing, education, protections for farmworkers, among others -- and urged eligible voters to exercise their right.

The campaign centered on relationship-focused strategies that research has shown to be most effective to increase voter turnout. Volunteer leaders reached out to eligible family, friends, co-workers, and faith communities to offer motivation and practical support to help them cast informed votes. Other strategies included socially-distanced in-person “Days of Action” with faith communities to register and educate voters, nonpartisan phone and text banking, and culturally and linguistically appropriate mailings and social media outreach to Latino voters across the state.



Registering new Latino voters in Orange County!

Through the NCCLLO’s electoral organizing efforts:

- We made a total of **273,533 nonpartisan contacts with Latino voters** through our relational voting (“friends & family”) program, phone and text banking, mailings, and other outreach.
- **245 leaders received training and coaching to help them contact voters** and assist them with registration, making a plan to vote safely during the pandemic, and access non-partisan information about candidates for office.
- **Volunteer leaders had 14,380 direct conversations with voters** to ensure they were registered, had a plan for when, where, and how to vote, and had resources to make informed decisions.

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*“[The NCCLLO electoral participation campaign] helped many in our community exercise their voice, because you helped us find resources and share them with those who needed them. As Latinos we have a voice. And as Catholics we have a voice.”*

*~ Youth group leader & volunteer in NCCLLO’s relational voting campaign, Mecklenburg County*

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Latino youth exercising their right during Early Voting!

Volunteer leaders agreed that voters responded well to voting information from trusted people in their own language. Leaders also expressed a desire to increase their involvement in civic work, such as contacting elected officials on a regular basis. Having engaged many infrequent and young, first-time voters, our electoral participation campaign has the potential to shape the results of future elections and highlighted the power of the growing Latino electorate in North Carolina.