



**Presentation to Democratic Platform Committee on the
2016 Hispanic Public Policy Agenda**

**Hector Sanchez, Chair of the National Hispanic Leadership Agenda and Executive
Director of Labor Council for Latin American Advancement**

Good afternoon. My name is Hector Sanchez. I am the Chair of the National Hispanic Leadership Agenda and Executive Director of the Labor Council for Latin American Advancement. We appreciate the opportunity to share the Latino priorities of the more than 58 million Latinos around the United States and in our territories.

NHLA is a coalition of 40 prominent Latino organizations. It is the space of unity among the Latino community. Through NHLA we come together to ensure that we are speaking with one voice to address the issues and concerns that have been identified by our community.

Today, I would like to discuss our policy priorities. I would also like to address the fact that over the past few months and years our community has been subject to anti-Latino attacks. These attacks are affecting the quality of life of our families.

This hostile environment is resulting in bullying in schools against our children. We see a rising number of hate crimes against Latinos all over the nation and this anti-Latino sentiment is increasingly affecting our quality of life and conditions in the work place.

For these reasons, it is so important for us to have an in depth conversation about the Latino public policy priorities. In my remarks today, I will address some of these briefly in the limited time that I have available to me. You will also each also receive a

copy of our 2016 Hispanic Public Policy Agenda. While we do not have enough time to cover all of the priorities, I am going to mention a couple of issues that are important to our community.

Our 2016 public policy agenda is the most comprehensive and inclusive agenda in the 25-year history of the NHLA. For the first time, we have included policy priorities on important topics such as criminal justice and environmental issues. Both of these issues seriously affect our community. In addition to taking on new substantive issue areas, it is also the most inclusive agenda because we ensured that our Latina Task Force ensured that each recommendation is viewed through a gender lens. This was critical because there are a number of issues that uniquely impact Latinas. For example, did you know that Latinas suffer from the biggest wage theft in the nation?

One of the important points that our policy agenda drives home is that we are not a one-issue kind of community. We are often invited to discuss immigration, but sometimes we are not invited to be part of important conversations about other issues that impact the quality of life of our community members, such as health, education and other issues. While we are not a one-issue community, immigration is important to our community. Why is immigration so important to our communities and for our families? Because it has really been shaping the quality of life that our community members have lived over the last 10 years. Anti-immigrant legislation has sprung up in states around the U.S. over the past decade, hate crimes against Latinos have risen, and we have seen racial profiling rise against individuals who are undocumented. Poverty is one of the issues that gravely harms our community, both the documented and undocumented individuals. Deportation is another critical problem that has had a devastating impact.

We know that there are many critical problems confronting our community and we strongly believe that it is very important for us to discuss these policy solutions with the President. We believe that our country has moved in the right direction with DAPA and DACA, but it is not enough. Our country needs immigration reform. The existing flawed system impacts the lives of every day people and has repercussions that reverberate beyond individuals to our children, our employers and our country as a whole.

Belief in the American Dream runs strong in the Latino community. Our community believes that the opportunity to work hard and get a good education will lead to a better quality of life, but for many workers obstacles stand in their way. Today Latinos are among the most vulnerable workers in the nation. We have the highest levels of wage theft- we don't get paid what we are due for the work that we perform. Unfortunately, our sisters have also experienced a drastic increase in the prevalence of sexual harassment and rape in the workplace, which is totally unacceptable. This is especially true for Latina workers in low wage jobs, including building services, food establishments, agriculture, and home healthcare.

We need increased enforcement of worker protections, including the enactment of the Paycheck Fairness Act, guaranteed paid sick leave, increasing the minimum wage to \$15/hour by 2020 and extending workers protections to farmworkers, caregivers, domestic workers and day laborers. All of those sectors are overrepresented by Latino workers.

Our agenda also recommends taking urgent action to address the ongoing financial crisis in Puerto Rico. Regardless of what happens in Congress this week or in

the weeks to come, we as a nation need to stand by Puerto Rico and give it the tools necessary to prosper and to improve the standard of living for its people.

We must also commit to providing Latinos the opportunity to engage in public service. A government of, by, and for the people must reflect the diversity of the nation. Latinos are some of the most underrepresented when it comes to public service and there are structural barriers that make it really hard for Latinos to be a part of this space of power.

As citizens of this nation, we have a right to expect an equal opportunity to exercise our talents and skills through service in all levels of the federal workforce. Unfortunately, Hispanic representation in the federal workforce is a mere 8.4 percent, about half of our share of the nation's civilian labor force. We, therefore, call on the next President to issue an Executive Order with strong accountability mechanisms that will increase the number of Latinos serving in the federal workforce.

To improve Latino representation among Presidential appointments, NHLA launched its Federal Appointments Project in 2013, which has created an infrastructure to identify and support Latino candidates for political appointments, and which has successfully placed 40 appointees in the current Administration. We look forward to working with the next Administration to continue to address the needs and concerns of the Latino community.

In closing, our policy agenda is not simply an agenda of Latino issues. These are American issues. Our mission aligns with a goal that we can all stand behind—no matter our background—which is to move this country forward toward a more prosperous and inclusive future for all.