

MID-SESSION RECAP AT THE LEGISLATURE

APRIL 2022



2022 MID-SESSION RECAP AT THE LEGISLATURE

With more than 4,000 bills introduced during this biennium, the 92nd legislature is slowly winding down. Before the legislative recess in the current session, more than a dozen of omnibus bills ranging from education, workforce development, taxes, health care, to agriculture and state government were heard in the House and the Senate before the third deadline, when committee members heard multiple initiatives including new policy provisions and supplemental budget investments thanks to the state's projected surplus of \$9.3 billion.

Because of a divided legislature, there is an impasse about how to spend this money. Two main items hold the key to resolving this impasse: replenishing the unemployment insurance trust fund to avoid businesses having to pay more in unemployment taxes; and the amount of money for frontline workers, with a proposal of a \$1 billion plan to provide checks up to \$1,500 that would go to as many as 677,000 people.

A small number of bills that would have a positive impact in Latinx communities and other communities of color were heard and some have found a place in the omnibus bills. They include bills that MCLA's legislative team was actively leading, advocating for, or supporting during the first part of the 2022 session. The Governor's supplemental budget also included funding for services and programs that would be beneficial for our diverse communities, including establishing an office of enterprise interpretation, health care coverage for undocumented immigrant children, and establishing an office for refugees and immigrants.

The council also worked to stop or improve bills that our communities think work to our disadvantage. For example, we sought to improve a bill that would require high school graduates to apply for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) without considering the situation of our diverse Latino communities. We also advised on the implications of sports gambling in our Latinx youth community.

Below you'll find a summary of MCLA's priorities based on our community informed agenda. The goal for this session is to pass legislation that will directly impact the ability for Latinos to build a better life and financial future, while closing opportunity gaps and ensuring that Latinx students obtain and get a quality education.

At the end, you'll find a summary of other bills that would be beneficial to our communities if passed before the end of the session in May.





ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT- CONSUMER PROTECTION-TAXES



Latinos in Minnesota have become a growing, stronger population contributing highly to Minnesota's economy, business growth, and workforce. However, Latinos are still a young population in the state and face different challenges when it comes to economic development and taxation. While Latinos are strong business drivers, they have not been incentivized through state programming. Minnesota's business investments have not yet reflected specific needs and niches associated with our community. Additionally, Latinos are still learning about how state's tax code can affect our community's ability to build generational wealth.

This is why in 2022, the Council's legislative agenda includes a set of bills that will protect and help grow the economic outcomes of Latinos in Minnesota. The bills listed below count with bipartisan support and have been heard in Committee. Most of them have also been included in Omnibus bills and we are working arduously to ensure their passage in both Chambers.

HF3096/SF2639 – This bill will exclude Latino and other Veterans from paying taxes on their Social Security. This issue was identified as a big priority after conversations with members of the Mexican American Veterans Post 5 in West St. Paul, where they

ranked it as the top issue affecting them. A lot of Veterans, including Latino Veterans, rely heavily on their Social Security to survive and it would be a big help if they did not have to pay state taxes like Veterans in other states.





ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT- CONSUMER PROTECTION-TAXES

HF2823/SF2622 – This bill will require used car dealerships to inform consumers if a “kill switch” has been installed in the cars that they are selling, and under which specific circumstances they will use it. The intent of this bill is to ensure that Latino consumers do not run the risk of losing their cars if they happen to miss a car payment after buying from a used car dealership. This was identified as a critical concern by one of our community partners since most of the dealership that have adopted this practice are the dealership that a considerable number of Latinos tend to do business with. By avoiding vehicle repossession, our communities can protect their stability, their credit, and ultimately increase their quality of life.

HF2824/SF3835 – This bill require that used car dealerships have the price of the vehicle accessible to consumers prior to them expressing interest in said vehicle. The price can be displayed on the windshield, available online, or in some other way. The purpose of this proposal is to ensure that consumers have access to the price of a vehicle at any time before starting any transaction. One of our community partners identified a pattern of bad business practices affecting Latino consumers including lack of transparency on behalf of used car dealerships. By not knowing the price of a vehicle for sale, Latino consumers have become victims of predatory practices and have paid higher prices for used vehicles. If passed, this bill will help Latinos pay a fair price for a used vehicle and be able to keep more money in their pockets.

HF2825/SF2624 – This bill will eliminate the bait-and-switch practice that Latinos have become victims to when buying a vehicle by requiring that a used car sale transaction be conducted entirely in the language in which it was started. This bait-and-switch occurs when a Latino consumer is helped by a Spanish-speaking salesperson at a car dealership but then the financing staff are English speakers. This practice has resulted in Latinos signing contracts that they did not fully understand; and has resulted in our community members paying high interest rates and sometimes having their vehicles repossessed. This proposal will help Latinos in the state have a better car buying experience and be able to make better financial decision while buying a car.

HF3155/SF3363 – This bill will create a new Hair Technician License in the state of Minnesota. This is a critical need for Latino cosmetologists that have identified it as their main barrier to becoming licensed to practice in the state of Minnesota. Latino cosmetologists approached the Council two years ago with this issue and we have been working hand-in-hand with them. If passed, this bill will remove barriers for the Minnesota Latino population towards becoming licensed Hair Technicians and will allow Latino salon owners to have fully licensed staff. This proposal will directly impact the ability to create a more stable economy for Latino cosmetologists in the state.

Additionally, the Council is also active in the efforts to provide a one-time compensation to Frontline workers. Our involvement is to ensure that industries where lower-income Latinos have a high participation are recognized essential. This proposal has been passing Committees in the House but faces a big challenge in the Senate.





EDUCATION



Minnesota has one of the nation's worst achievement gaps when it comes to education. In 2019, it ranked 50th for racial disparities in high school graduation rates. Graduation rates for that same year for Latinx students was 69.9% compared to 88.7% for White students. When we look at the most recent graduation rates (2021), the rate among Latinx students dropped to 69.3% while White students' rate was 88.3%. There needs to be a sense of urgency on this issue, as our students' learning continues to be impeded by structural and systemic challenges that have only been exacerbated by the pandemic and current events such as gun violence, international crises, racial profiling, police brutality and inadequate access to quality mental health services. Gaps are also exacerbated by economic inequities and geographic areas with limited access to education resources, including well-qualified educators. Disciplinary practices that consistently push certain students out of the classroom also contribute to ongoing gaps.

INCREASE TEACHERS OF COLOR ACT

The Increase Teachers of Color Act aims to address the inequalities that have been persistent in our education system by requiring districts to formulate a plan that ensures that the learning and

work environments “validate, embrace, affirm and integrate the cultural and community strengths for all students, families, and employees.” In Minnesota, there are fewer than 3,000 BIPOC teachers. As a state, we have yet to take the nec-





EDUCATION

essary systemic action to truly achieve improved results and narrow equity gaps, including addressing the persistent shortage of BIPOC teachers.

MCLA has been a key player by taking on a leadership role since 2017, by making this bill one of their top joint educational priorities along with the other two Ethnic Councils and the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council while continuing to work in close collaboration with the [Coalition](#) to Increase Teachers of Color and American Indian Teachers in Minnesota. This year presented special challenges in moving this bill through the legislation process such as teacher strikes in Minneapolis and St. Paul, historic surplus, redistricting of maps that led to early retirements, especially among our Latinx Legislators.

This session's strategies to advance ITCA was to clone the k-12 portion of the bill in the Senate. The [HF3079](#) with the cloned [SF3132](#) and [SF3804](#) contained policy amendments not included in the last session that seek to diversify the workforce with qualified teachers that resemble the school population including a pedagogy that reflects the racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds of all students. The bill was heard in the House Education Policy Committee in February and referred to the House Education Finance Committee. The bill passed both committees and its main provisions were included in Chair Davnie's Education Omnibus bill. In the Senate the bill was introduced and referred to the Education Finance and Policy Committee, where it didn't have a hearing.

[HF3917/SF3714](#) is for appropriations in the Office of Higher Education. It aims to increase funding for the Underrepresented Student Teachers grant and the Aspiring Teachers of Color Scholar-

ship pilot program. The bill was heard in the House Higher Education Finance and Policy Committee in March. In the Senate, the bill was heard in the Higher Education Finance and Policy Committee. The bill successfully passed both committees while important provisions and funding to strengthen ITCA were included in the Higher Education Omnibus bill.

Policy components of HF3079 have been incorporated into [HF3401](#) which had a walk-through hearing in the Education Policy Committee in March. The bill was referred to be heard in the Education Finance Committee. The Senate has yet to release their E12 omnibus bill. The bill does have bipartisan support and that has led to some wins in some of the components of the bill.

MCLA also took on a supporting role for the English Learners Bill ([HF1939](#)). The bill was heard in the House Education Policy Committee and referred to be heard in the House Education Finance Committee. The bill passed both committees and has been included in the k-12 Education Omnibus bill. In the Senate the bill SF1964 was introduced and referred to the Education Finance and Policy Committee, where it awaits having a hearing.

MCLA also had a chance to advise the organization Ed Allies on bill [HF2046](#) to discuss our concerns of the Universal High School Completion Bill. This bill seeks to increase the number of FAFSA applicants by making it a requirement for graduation. MCLA believes that the proposed bill unreasonably burdens the student without regards for the Local Educational Authority's role in providing necessary instruction and support to students and their family.





OTHER BILLS



Other bills tracked by MCLA with positive implications for Latinx communities include funding the expansion of Minnesota Care for 1,700 undocumented children contained in [HF4706](#). This bill also includes improved access to mental health services, addressing deep poverty in the state, culturally specific grants to address the opioid epidemic, healthy child development grants through the Community Solutions program, and mental health loan forgiveness grants for culturally competent mental health services, among others. Finally, the State Government Finance and Elections omnibus bill ([HF4293](#)) also includes an office for enterprise translations which has been a top priority among diverse linguistic communities to obtain timely and culturally accurate translations of government official information.



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ON LEGISLATION
AND POLICY WITH
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