

# ANNUAL LEGISLATIVE REPORT 2022

LEGISLATIVE REPORT AS REQUESTED BY MINNESOTA STATUTE 15.0145







## OUR MISSION

The Minnesota Council on Latino Affairs is a state agency in the Executive Branch entrusted to advise, inform, influence and connect in a nonpartisan way to improve the lives of Hispanic or Latinx/e Minnesotans.



## OUR VISION

Powerful and diverse voices drive and affect policy and systems change that is equitable and improves the lives of Minnesotans of Latin American and Caribbean descent.



## OUR VALUES

Voice. Quality of Life. Democracy. Presence. Linkage. Mutual Prosperity. Inclusive and Anti-Racist.

**ADVISE**  **INFLUENCE**  **CONNECT**



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The Council **advises** and **works** with the **legislature** and the **governor** towards the **implementation** of the economic, social, legal, and political equality for Minnesotans of Latino heritage (Minn. Stat. 15.0145)



# LETTER FROM THE COUNCIL CHAIR

Dear members of the Minnesota State Legislature,

As the chair of the Minnesota Council on Latino Affairs (MCLA), it continues to be my honor and responsibility to present the Council's legislative report for 2022. This year we heard many legislators announce their retirement. Many of them have been allies of our work over the years.

Some of those legislators include Sen. Melisa Lopez-Franzen, Sen. Patricia Torres-Ray, Rep. Carlos Mariani, and Rep. Rod Hamilton. The Council celebrates all the work they have accomplished, and we wish them luck on all their future endeavors.

In this last legislative session and during the year, MCLA had many successes that align with our 2022-2025 Strategic Framework:



1. At the beginning of the session, staff and Council members held a virtual meeting with legislators from both chambers and parties to discuss MCLA's legislative priorities, opening a needed forum to discuss policy solutions to advance Latino academic success and promote equitable prosperity, health, and wellbeing in our communities.
2. MCLA got two bills to the finish line which were adopted on the omnibus bills in education and higher education (Increase Teachers of Color bill) and in state government (new Hair Technical License).
3. This summer, MCLA's community engagement focused on the Latinx youth, and these conversations once again informed our legislative agenda for 2023-2024. A report, both in English and Spanish, was produced and printed for the legislature, policy makers, and the public at large.
4. The Council launched a series of roundtable conversations with Latino and non-Latino stakeholders to raise awareness about the need to increase higher education attainment and inform workforce development opportunities for young and adult Latinos.
5. MCLA engaged in an authentic partnership opportunity with local Mexican American artists to unveil the first ever Community Altar for Day of the Death at the State Capitol.
6. The Council increased and expanded relationships with Latino organizations to support Latino legislative priorities during the 2023-2024 session.

The Council is very excited for 2023 and to meet with every new legislator to get them familiar with the work of MCLA. It is going to take a lot of people-power to help pass an equitable budget from the projected surplus at the next legislative session, but our window of opportunity to do so is wider than ever. MCLA will work hard to pass legislation that will close opportunity gaps and reduce racial disparities in order to promote equity and prosperity with all underserved communities, including ours.

Sincerely,

**Marco Hernández**  
2022 MCLA Chairman, CD3



## INTRODUCTION



Tim Penny, CEO of the Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation, and Council member and Senator, Carla Nelson, welcoming participants during MCLA's listening session in Owatonna (July 2022)

The Minnesota Council on Latino Affairs presents its 2022 Legislative Report to the Minnesota State Legislature. As our Council chair detailed on his letter, 2022 was a year of many successes for MCLA executing its legislative mandate and serving Minnesotans. It was also a year in which MCLA continued to provide leadership, advise, and stewardship when the state and our constituents needed it the most.

After some staff changes and transitions, the Council ended the year fully and stably staffed with no vacancies on its board, except those that per statute ended last year. As we all know, the pandemic caused many disruptions, including in the labor market, and government is a sector that has not been spared by new trends in employment. However, MCLA is being more intentional in hiring and retaining Latino talent in the agency, by promoting current staff, offering professional development opportunities, including leadership training, and instituting a Staff Retention Committee to work closely with state administrators and address this issue. At the same time, during 2022, MCLA continued strengthening the role of board members by aligning

their statutory service with the staff's work and executing MCLA's 2022-2025 Strategic Framework approved by the Board in 2021.

The Council's staff and members worked collaboratively on the recently instituted board's internal Legislative Committee which helps staff strategize and offer recommendations regarding the Council's overall legislative and policy work. In that vein, MCLA convened a bipartisan virtual meeting at the beginning of the 2022 Legislative Session that informed about MCLA's work and presented the community's legislative priorities. The event, Policy and Coffee with MCLA, brought together eight council members and two dozen of legislators, from both parties, to discuss the Latino community's priorities and the Council's recommendations.

We continued to focus on our legislative work, ranging from supporting a comprehensive bill to increase teachers of color with key investments; raising awareness about the singular work of Latina estheticians looking at removing barriers in their profession, to working on tax initiatives to expand financial opportunities for

## INTRODUCTION

all Latinos to achieve prosperity. Out of that work, the legislative staff was instrumental in successfully securing investments to increase the number of teachers of color and include veterans in the agreed tax bill to have access to all applicable tax benefits in the state. Unfortunately, at the end of the session, despite some previous agreements, the Senate and the House of Representatives could not reach final agreements to pass two successful bills (out of five) successfully advance in the area of economic development.

On the other hand, MCLA staff also helped with the Frontline Worker Pay Coalition, supporting the expansion of sectors and individuals eligible to apply to a bonus pay due to the COVID-19 pandemic, especially essential workers in farming and agroindustry, but also in the services and hospitality economy. Staff also created a bilingual webpage on our website to support the community in the application process.

In addition to advising the state legislature, MCLA seized the opportunity to execute its mandate by providing insightful recommendations to the current administration, including policy conversations with the Office of the Governor and Lieutenant Governor, and presenting a comprehensive set of 2023 budget recommendations to their policy team to invest in, and expand programs and services much needed in the Latino community.

This year also presented to the Council opportunities to effectively adapt and to continue serving as a bridge between the community and state government. Our team advised key government agencies, including the Minnesota Department of Education, the Minnesota Department of Health, the Office of Higher Education, the Department of Labor and Industry, and the Department of Employment and Economic Development. We also contributed with information, on multiple occasions, to a wide array of legislators and state agencies with recommendations gleaned from our outreach to our constituents about different kinds of needs. For instance, MCLA created a specific webpage with resources and information about redistricting and voter information during the past mid-term elections. In addition, we connected staff at various community organizations with information and resources provided by the State of Minnesota.

This year, the arts organization NeoMuralismos de México contacted MCLA to partner with us to display the first ever community Altar for Day of the Dead at the State Capitol from November 1 to November 12. This marked a historic moment in Minnesota and for Latino communities. The altar at the Capitol served to highlight and represent the cultural traditions of Mexican and Latinx communities in Minnesota, created a space for remembrance of the many lives that have been lost in recent years (from COVID, police violence, and social unrest) while offered a space for community healing and representation.

Finally, through the leadership of Council member Representative Jon Koznick and our legislative team, we also convened a series of Roundtable Conversations to stress the importance to increase higher education attainment for Latino students, and at the same time create a network of state agencies, Latino organizations and media, and representatives from trades, apprenticeships, and education entities to promote employment opportunities and connect prospective employees with employers.

It is in this new environment, where a certain level of normalcy is back after two challenging years of the COVID-19 pandemic and social unrest, that MCLA successfully continues to adapt, understand new trends, and build relationships with both political parties to advance legislation that will benefit all Minnesotans, and more specifically our constituents.

This report will detail MCLA's bi-partisan legislative work, community outreach and engagement, and its 2022 fiscal year expenditures. In reading our annual report, the legislature will see that MCLA is a state agency that, despite its small size and faced with unpredictable changes, remains focused, provides level-headed leadership in important policy areas, and properly informs decision makers about the recommendations and aspirations of Latinos in the state. At a time when demographics continue to change and Minnesota becomes more diverse as informed by the U.S. Census, with baby-boomers retiring in communities across the state and thousands of jobs available in crucial sectors like health care, childcare, education, services, engineering, agriculture, food processing, and manufacturing, the imperative need to close opportunity gaps is more than ever a top priority for the economic health of Minnesota.



# MCLA'S MAIN GOALS AND 2022 HIGHLIGHTS

As a small-staffed and efficient state agency, MCLA prioritizes its work through a three-pronged approach: **1)** Advise the state legislature, the Governor and Lieutenant Governor's office, and executive branch agencies on the policy priorities of Minnesota's Latino community, **2)** Connect the Latino community and the State of Minnesota, and **3)** Influence public policy while adding value to state government.



## 1. ADVISE

The primary purpose of MCLA is to provide non-partisan, fact-based analysis, and advise to state government. Whether it is through our in-house research, direct meetings with legislators, testifying during hearings, or holding policy-focused events, MCLA works to ensure that it properly advises the State of Minnesota on the Latino community.



MCLA's legislative team meeting with Speaker Melisa Hortman to discuss the Council's 2022 Legislative Priorities.



MCLA's testifier, Azomali Obisakin, a young student from Crookston, offering her testimony in support of ITCA.



Felipe Illescas and Senator Nelson testifying in support of SF 3363, Hair Technician license



# MCLA'S MAIN GOALS AND 2022 HIGHLIGHTS

## 2. CONNECT

MCLA finds a variety of ways to connect Minnesota Latinos and state government. The agency prioritizes any appropriate channels to directly connect Latino community members to their state legislators, state agencies, or other levels of government. The lived experiences, stories, and perspectives of Latino members are insightful and powerful.

### 2022 Legislative Recaps

MCLA released two bilingual legislative reports that assessed the 2022 regular and special legislative sessions, highlighting some positive outcomes for the community, and stressing pending changes moving forward.

### Coffee and Policy with MCLA

In February, at the beginning of the session, the Council held a virtual presentation with legislators representing districts with a high percentage of Latinos in the state. The Council presented data about Latinos in the state and its legislative priorities, followed by questions by representatives and senators from both parties.

### Community Altar for Día de Muertos at the State Capitol

In partnership with MCLA and the Latino arts organization (Neo) Muralismos de Mexico, artists Mónica Vega and Flor Soto, created and installed the first ever “Altar de Muertos”, or Community Altar for Days of the Dead at the Minnesota State Capitol. Officials and the public had a chance to visit it from November 1 to November 12, 2022.







# MCLA'S MAIN GOALS AND 2022 HIGHLIGHTS

## 3. INFLUENCE

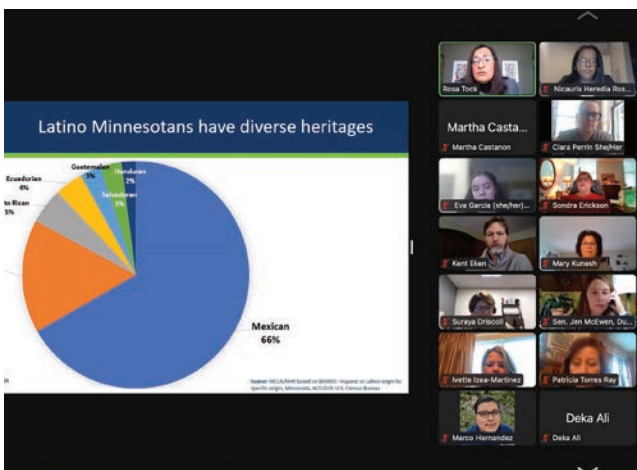
Whether it is providing non-partisan research and analysis, or advising a state legislator on Latinos who live and work in their district, MCLA works hard to create a space for dialogue to help influence and shape policy by providing timely expertise that adds value to state government and makes the state a more prosperous and inclusive place for every resident.

### 2022 Community Listening Sessions Report

During the summer, MCLA conducted five community engagement sessions with Latinx residents in St. Paul, Minneapolis, Owatonna, Crookston, and Brooklyn Center. The community meetings were coordinated in cooperation with Latino organizations or individuals. They helped MCLA invite members of the local Latinx community to participate in the meetings. This year, MCLA's focus was on the Latinx youth, their challenges, dreams, and aspirations.

### 2022 Proclamations

MCLA worked with the Office of the Governor and Lt. Governor to draft the Latino Heritage Month Proclamation and translate it into Spanish. Their office also issued the first proclamation for Día de los Muertos in November, as part of the celebrations of the Altar at the State Capitol.





# 2022 LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY PRIORITIES



## EDUCATION

### 1. Policy provisions in the 2022 Increase Teachers of Color Act (ITCA)

As part of the Increase Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers legislation, address the need for districts and charter schools to be required to provide for a welcoming and respectful environment and have an inclusive curriculum for all students in their strategic plans. Other provisions that need to be included are the creation of State goals to increase TOCAIT by 2040 and accompanying report, and requirements for teacher licensing exams for Tier 3 & Tier 4. Amendments to the Collaborative Urban and Greater Minnesota Educators of Color Grant Program are also included in this new iteration of the bill.

### 2. English Language Learners

Advocate for improved classroom experiences (virtual and in person) and more funding in English Language Learners (ELL) programming.  
Policy

#### Among other topics, the following were some areas of on-going conversations with MDE:

1. **English Learners:** addressing challenges and increasing graduation rates among EL students
2. **Innovative alternative methods of instruction:** distance learning and social emotional learning
3. **Invest and encourage increased participation in PSEO options**





# 2022 LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY PRIORITIES



## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT/TAXES

### 1. Hair Practitioner License

Since 2020, MCLA has been working with Latina constituents affected by over regulation to operate their business, particularly for estheticians who only want to cut hair. They assert that having a Hair Practitioner License (hair-only license) will significantly help them become licensed, operate, and work under state regulations. In 2021, MCLA worked in a more comprehensive bill but for 2022, the approach will be to focus on the hair-only license.

### 2. Veterans

Ensure that Latino veterans have access to all applicable tax benefits in the state. One of these benefits would be not taxing social security payments for veterans. Since 2019, a group of Latino Veterans met with staff and they identified this as the most critical issue for them since, for some, this is a big part of their income.

### 3. Consumer Protection

**3.1 Car prices displayed or available.** Constituents working on consumers' protection came to the Council two years ago with a concern that small car dealerships are taking advantage of Latinx clients, by changing the prices of used vehicles based on people's credit and income. This practice is unfair and has been penalized by the Attorney General's Office. This proposal would require that the price of a used vehicle for sale be available to the public in a clear and visible format.

**3.2 Single Language Transaction bill.** This bill would require that when the transaction for the purchase of a vehicle with a car dealership starts in one language, it finishes the transaction in that same language. Many non-English speaker clients end up signing contracts in English and are unaware of additional information not discussed during the oral transaction.

### 4. Supplemental Budget and American Recovery Plan Funding

With the negotiations for the supplemental budget expected to be held in 2022 and \$1.150 Billion in American Rescue Plan (ARP) funds, there was an opportunity to support and invest on equitable funds for Latinx communities in priority areas such as support of immediate economic stabilization for households and businesses and address systemic public health and economic challenges that have contributed to the inequitable impact of the pandemic.





## 2022 LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY PRIORITIES



### EQUITABLE ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

MCLA is committed to joining with others to remove barriers to access affordable and quality health care and to provide services that are culturally and linguistically relevant. This is crucial for Latino families and children for their overall wellbeing, physically and mentally.

MCLA supported the petition of immigrant led organizations requesting the expansion of health care coverage for individual and families living in Minnesota, regardless of immigration status

MCLA also supported the Alzheimer's Public Information Bill (SF178) sponsored by the Minnesota Alzheimer's Association. since it has the potential to benefit Latinx communities' awareness and early interventions.



### NEW MINNESOTANS

Support the community's efforts to re-instate access to a MN Driver's License to all drivers regardless of immigration status.





# SUMMARY OF METRICS OF SUCCESS

## LEGISLATIVE AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

LEGISLATION DRAFTED BY MCLA  
OR IN COLLABORATION WITH  
OTHERS

**5** pieces of legislation

LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY/  
POSITION STATEMENTS

**20** position statements or  
committee testimonies

**210**

MEETINGS WITH  
LEGISLATORS, LEGISLATIVE  
AIDS, AND EXECUTIVE  
BRANCH AGENCIES

### PUBLIC OUTREACH AND LISTENING SESSIONS

**20** public  
presentations

**5** listening  
sessions

**2** new bilingual informational webpages to inform  
the community about registration and voting,  
and how to apply to the Frontline Workers Pay

MEETINGS WITH CONSTITUENTS,  
COMMUNITY LEADERS, AND  
LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS

**150** virtual or in person meetings,  
and phone communications

CONSTITUENTS REACHED THROUGH  
SOCIAL MEDIA AND TRADITIONAL  
COMMUNICATIONS

**35,000** constituents reached through  
communications, including 12 e-newsletters  
and several interviews in local Latino media

## PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH AND IN-HOUSE DATA ANALYSIS

2022 COMMUNITY  
LISTENING SESSIONS  
REPORT "OUR PATH TO  
SUCCESS: VOICES OF  
MINNESOTA LATINE/X  
YOUTH".

This bilingual publication released in November 2022, includes policy recommendations and is a comprehensive review of the challenges the Minnesota Latino youth face and the opportunities and aspirations they envision.

## TASKFORCE GROUPS AND PARTNERSHIPS

- The Coalition to Increase Teachers of Color and American Indian Teachers in Minnesota
- Cultural and Ethnic Communities Leadership Council (Department of Human Services)
- Minnesota Healthy Partnership (Minnesota Department of Health)
- Tax Legislative Table
- Governor's Workforce Development Board (GWDB)
- Racial Equity Impact Notes Workgroup (Center for Economic Inclusion)
- MDH's Latinx/Hispanic Latino Leaders bi-weekly meetings
- MDE's Migrant Services Consortium
- Frontline Workers Pay Workforce Group
- MCLA and Latino organizations united alliance to advance a Latino Agenda
- Licenses for All Coalition





## IA COMMUNITY-INFORMED APPROACH TO INFLUENCE POLICY AND LEGISLATION

Since 2017, in order to credibly fulfill its mission, MCLA has developed its legislative agenda through a process of community-led outreach. During the 2022 summer, MCLA conducted five community engagement sessions and multiple conversations with diverse constituents to hear the priorities of the Latino community. This year we totaled 26 visits in the last five years.

The community meetings were coordinated in cooperation with multiple organizations and individuals. These partners, with roots in the community, helped MCLA invite members of the local Latinx community to participate in the meetings. The sessions were designed with a similar approach and methodology than other community sessions conducted in previous years. As a bridge between the community and state leaders, MCLA wanted to hold meetings in metro areas that have seen an increase of the Latino population such as Brooklyn Center, St. Paul, and Minneapolis, without losing scope of Greater Minnesota. This is the reason why this year we decided to visit two localities MCLA hasn't reached out to in many years, Crookston and Owatonna. Also, based on input from our board and other members of the community, the focus was on the youth, as we know that Latinos' median age is 25 compared to 38 for the whole population in Minnesota. They are the present and future of the state.

Through these sessions, the Council was able to hear directly from Latine youth about the issues that are important to them and their vision for the future. These sessions also gave our youth the opportunity to

learn about the legislative process and how they can be involved in developing wider solutions. The sessions were held in English and Spanish. Approximately 90 people participated in our sessions. It is through these listening sessions that MCLA is able to gain a better understanding of the current state of the Latine/x community, as well as identify ways to respond effectively to their concerns and needs. Using this approach allows for a more responsive and proactive approach to policy making, which is essential in meeting the community's changing needs. In addition to these listening sessions, MCLA also conducted an online survey in September to gather more input from Latine/x Minnesotans.

The testimonies shared during MCLA's visits resonated with previous visits but showcased other issues, such as the impact that inflation has had in the economy affecting low-income families, and the fact that there hasn't been a final resolution at the federal level regarding comprehensive immigration reform. Also, there are still urgent needs associated with the lack to access to affordable quality healthcare (including culturally relevant mental health services), closing opportunity gaps in education, workplace safety for low wage workers, and access to driver licenses regardless of immigration status.

An underlying and consistently identified contributor to much of the challenging issues experienced by the state's Latino community is the disconnect and sentiment of isolation from government institutions at the local, state, and federal levels. The effects of the pandemic also resulted in gaps to access technology and guidance as



Group discussion, listening session in Saint Paul



Participants, listening session in Brooklyn Center





# A COMMUNITY-INFORMED APPROACH TO INFLUENCE POLICY AND LEGISLATION

students transitioned to distance learning.

Some policy recommendations included in the report are geared towards improving the quality of life of Latino Minnesotans, eliminating systemic barriers in education and paths to financial stability, and ushering in reciprocity for the contributions they continue to make in our local economies and across the state. Reinstating the privilege to obtain and renew a standard drivers license continues to be one of the most important requests from the community, as well as being able to access tax benefits for ITIN holders. These recommendations will inform

MCLA's legislative, policy, and budget agenda for the upcoming 2023 Legislative Session.

In sum, key findings from the conversations conducted statewide include the palpable and demonstrable resilience throughout Latinx youth and communities. The active role of the youth and their parents organizing through affinity networks to respond to recurrent crises in the face of salient inadequacies of state or federal aid are notable, making multigenerational and bilingual and bicultural communications relevant to support them in their pursuit to a good quality of life in the state.



Group discussion, listening session in Minneapolis



Group discussion, listening session in Owatonna



Group discussion, listening session in Crookston

## FY22 EXPENDITURES

<b>General Fund</b> .....	<b>\$534,000</b>
<b>Expenditures</b>	
Full Time .....	\$ 343,406.79
Part Time - Seasonal.....	\$ 22,841.40
Overtime .....	\$ 3,115.35
Other Employee Cost .....	\$ 5,340.05
Space Rental and Utilities .....	\$ 16,835.48
Printing and Advertising.....	\$ 373.48
Professional Technical Services.....	\$ 12,200.15
Communications.....	\$ 2,366.32
In State Travel .....	\$ 922.88
Out of State Travel .....	\$ 1,963.16
Employee Development.....	\$ 1,146.99
State Agency Prof Tech Services.....	\$ 0.00
Central MNIT Services .....	\$ 20,751.76
Agency Specific MNIT Services .....	\$ 1,000.00
Supplies.....	\$ 441.54
Equipment.....	\$ 368.59
Equipment-Non Capital.....	\$ 819.83
Other Operating Costs .....	\$ 3,133.25
<b>Total</b> .....	<b>\$ 437,027.02</b>



# BOARD MEMBERS



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Congressional District 1



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**LETICIA GUADARRAMA**  
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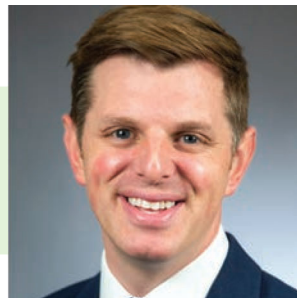
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TORRES RAY**  
District 63



**REPRESENTATIVE  
JON KOZNICK**  
District 58A



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MICHAEL HOWARD**  
District 50A

## STAFF



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Executive Director



**KATYA ZEPEDA**  
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**NICAURIS HEREDIA ROSARIO**  
Legislative and Policy Director  
-Economic Development-



**WENDY SÁNCHEZ**  
Office and Communications Manager

### OTHER STAFF (APRIL 2019-SEPTEMBER 2022)

**Felipe Illescas**  
Legislative and Policy Director  
-Economic Development/Taxes-

### WE ALSO WANT TO THANK OUR THREE 2022 POLICY FELLOWS:

**Aramis Méndez** (University of Minnesota, School of Law),  
**Eva García** (University of Minnesota), and **Isabella Benjamin**  
(Macalester College), for their dedication and ideas  
supporting our work this year.





# THANK YOU!







**mi** MINNESOTA  
COUNCIL ON LATINO AFFAIRS



ADVISE AND INFORM  
ON LEGISLATION  
AND POLICY WITH  
**LATINO**  
MINNESOTANS

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