



ANNUAL LEGISLATIVE REPORT 2024

LEGISLATIVE REPORT AS REQUESTED BY MINNESOTA STATUTE 15.0145



ADVISE INFLUENCE CONNECT



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

46 YEARS OF SERVICE

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The Council **advises** and **works** with the **legislature** and the **Office of the Governor and Lt. 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'S CHAIR

Dear members of the Minnesota State Legislature,

It is an honor to serve as Chairwoman at the Minnesota Council on Latino Affairs. I'm excited to share key highlights and accomplishments from our hardworking team over the past legislative session and calendar year. Our members' dedication has resulted in meaningful successes aligned with our 2022-2025 Strategic Framework, reflecting our commitment to supporting the Latine community. I'm thrilled to update you on our progress in advocacy, community engagement, and coalition-building.

During this last legislative session and throughout the year, MCLA celebrated many successes. Here are some key highlights:

1. MCLA successfully advocated to make important changes for the Increase Teachers of Color bill, obtaining a one-time appropriation for the Aspiring Teachers of Color program. The Council supported and advocated for five bills that passed during the session, including a task force to prevent violence against women, reforms to contracts for deed, the pesticide applicator exam to be translated into Spanish, and funding for certified community behavioral health clinics at CLUES.
2. The Council effectively convened another Day at the Capitol, highlighting the importance of civic engagement and voting during the elections in November. We also celebrated in the spirit of 5 de Mayo, a historic landmark for Mexican-Americans. The event saw approximately 200 participants attending such an important convening at the people's house.
3. At the end of the session, the Council held a townhall meeting with several state agencies, including the Attorney General's Office, the Minnesota

Department of Education, the Department of Labor and Industry, and the Office of Higher Education, to inform the Latino community at large about legislative wins that will benefit their children and families.

4. This past summer, MCLA hosted three community listening sessions in Greater Minnesota: Rochester, Willmar, and Moorhead. In addition, the Council surveyed to gather input and recommendations to outline our 2025-2026 priorities. A report, both in

English and Spanish, was produced to help us inform the legislature, policymakers, and the public at large about community challenges and opportunities.

5. The Council increased and expanded relationships with Latino organizations to support Latino legislative priorities during the 2023-2024 session, co-creating an umbrella coalition of organizations advocating on public policy and legislation, the Minnesota Latino Leadership Alliance (MiLLA). For the second year in a row, thanks to the good offices of MCLA, MiLLA held a press conference at the beginning of the session to raise visibility

about a consensus Latino Public Policy agenda.

The Council is very excited to continue fostering working relationships with all legislators before and during the 2025 session to get them familiar with the work of MCLA and celebrate Latine Minnesotans' contributions to the state. The Council will continue producing non-partisan and evidence-based recommendations to help understand how to reduce opportunity gaps will benefit all Minnesotans.

Sincerely,

Ivette Martínez-Izea

2024 Chairwoman, At-large Board Member



INTRODUCTION

The Minnesota Council on Latino Affairs presents its 2024 Legislative Report to the Minnesota State Legislature. As our Council Chairwoman detailed on her letter, 2024 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 around pressing issues in the community as the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are still felt, especially in our schools and its impact in the academic success of our students.

The Council's staff and members worked collaboratively in its internal Legislative Committee which helps staff strategize and offer recommendations regarding the Council's overall legislative and policy work. In that

vein, MCLA continued to focus on our legislative work, ranging from supporting a comprehensive bill to increase teachers of color with key investments; to making sure that contracts for deed are transparent, fair, and protect our vulnerable consumers.

Thanks to this work, the legislative staff was instrumental in successfully securing investments in many programs to increase and retain the number of teachers of color, such as a one-time appropriation for the Aspiring Teachers of Color program. This advocacy was the perfect occasion to continue building a strong collaboration with the Ethnic Councils and the Coalition of Teachers of Color, a partnership that is now in its eight year. The Council also held numerous meetings with Latina hairdressers



Lt. Governor Peggy Flanagan addressing attendees at MCLA's Latine Day at the Capitol (May 2024)

INTRODUCTION

to inform them and help them understand the new hair technician license passed in 2023 which is effective since August of 2024.

In May, we held our Annual Latino Day at the Capitol which, once again, drew a considerable number of community members (approximately 200). Participants took advantage of resources provided by state and non-profit agencies. The event focused on Latino contributions to the state and the power of civic engagement as a tool for policy and systems change. This year, a segment of the event was held in the Capitol Mall, with a dozen of Latino organizations and other state agencies sharing resources with attendees, in addition to cultural and artistic expressions.

On the other hand, the MCLA staff also created a bilingual webpage on our website to support newcomers to the state which has been shared widely by the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) and other state agencies that work directly with families new to the state.

During the summer, MCLA conducted three listening sessions in Greater Minnesota. MCLA co-convened community conversations with local community leaders in Rochester, Willmar, and Morehead. This year we were innovative: we contracted a Latina women small business firm that facilitated the sessions. With our input, they also designed, conducted, and summarized the findings of a community priorities survey to understand the main issues affecting our constituents in several areas, including gaps in housing, transportation, education, and workforce development. As in previous years, the results will continue guiding our work by prioritizing legislative areas for the upcoming legislative sessions. We shared the bilingual report with Latino organizations and policy advisors. Our plan is to share the report with state legislators and other state agencies.

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 continue advising key government agencies, including the Minnesota Department of Education, the Minnesota Department of Health, the Office of Higher Education, Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, 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.

In the area of communications, a new area for MCLA, staff was key in producing and sharing with the public a series of videos informing about the elections, the legislative session, rebranding our e-newsletter, and expanding our outreach through our social media. We discovered through our listening sessions that there is a need in the community to do more outreach in Spanish, and this area will continue to play a vital role in making sure that our constituents learn about how to better interact with the state legislature, and what resources they can find to make sure to take advantage in a fair and equitable way, about the programs and services offered by the state of Minnesota.

After some staff changes and transitions, the Council ended the year stably staffed to embark in the new legislative session in 2025, with no vacancies on its board. MCLA continues to be intentional in hiring and retaining Latino talent in the agency, by offering professional development opportunities, including leadership trainings.

This report will detail MCLA's bi-partisan legislative work, community outreach and engagement, and its 2025 fiscal year expenditures as of December 2024. In reading our annual report, the legislature will see that MCLA is a state agency that, despite its small size and faced with unpredictable challenges, 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.

Minnesota is becoming 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. It is imperative to close opportunity gaps. This priority must be the North Star for the state to secure the economic health of all Minnesotans.

The Council feels proud to continue leaving its mark in the legislative and public policy arena, 46 years after its creation.

MCLA'S MAIN GOALS AND 2024 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.

This year, MCLA's leadership was key in advancing several bills that with staff's co-leadership or support passed in 2024:

2024 ITCA: one-time appropriation for the Aspiring Teachers of Color program (co-leading with the Coalition of Teachers of Color and ethnic councils).

- Taskforce on Preventing Violence against Women -now a Report- (passed)
- CLUES' funding for certified community behavioral health clinics (passed)
- Driver and vehicle services, materials in a language other than English (passed)
- Reforms to contracts for deed (passed)
- Pesticide Applicator exam to be translated into Spanish (passed)

In addition, MCLA supported the following bills:

- Minnesota Latino Museum
- Ranked Choice Voting
- Independent Redistricting Commission



Rosa Tock testifying in support of providing bilingual services with driver's license agents



Katya Zepeda and Antonio Garcia during a hearing

MCLA'S MAIN GOALS AND 2024 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.



Rosa Tock and other Latino leaders presenting a unified legislative agenda in February 2024.

Minnesota Latino Leadership Alliance (MiLLA)

At the beginning of the 2024 session, MCLA was instrumental in convening Latino-led organizations around a new concept of Latino advocacy to make our communities more visible and be equitable included in the 2024 session focused on policy and capital and bonding. MCLA organized a press conference to delineate a Latino Consensus Public Policy Agenda for the 2024 Legislative Session.

Latine Day at the Capitol: “Celebrate. Engage. Connect.”

In May, towards the end of the session, the Council held its annual rally at the Capitol. We celebrated 5 de Mayo this year by recognizing Latine elected leaders who have made a long-lasting impact in the community through their service and advocacy work. At the same time, Secretary of State, Steve Simon, addressed the community about the importance of participation and voting, and the integrity of the electoral process. Lt. Governor Peggy Flanagan also talked about the importance of representation and civic engagement to make the state more inclusive and equitable.

Singer Yunuén Avila
performs a capella
Gloria Estefan's
“Mi tierra”, during
MCLA's Day at the
Capitol.

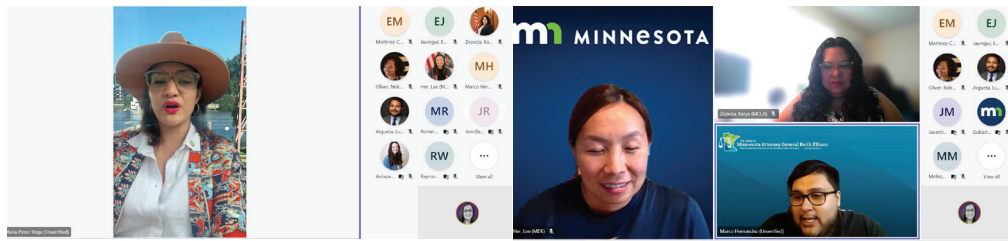


MCLA'S MAIN GOALS AND 2024 HIGHLIGHTS

2. CONNECT

End of Session Townhall

MCLA convened Latino leaders and the community to discuss the main legislative actions the Council supported during the session, so they could hear directly from the state departments that are in charge of implementing the new legislation. The [townhall](#) included different policy topics such as the Medical Debt Fairness Act, the Safe Workplace for Meat and Poultry Processing Workers Act, Programs to Support Teachers of Color, Tenants Rights to Organize Bill, and the importance of external groups to inform the Minnesota Department of Education in addressing staff shortages in the K-12 system.



Staff and Council members presenting during MCLA's End of the Legislative Session Townhall

2024 Legislative Recaps

MCLA released two bilingual legislative reports and two videos that assessed the 2024 legislative sessions, highlighting the main positive outcomes for the community, and stressing pending changes moving forward.

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.

2024 Community Priorities Report

During the summer-fall, MCLA hired a research consultancy firm to help us convene three listening sessions in Greater Minnesota (Rochester, Willmar, and Moorhead) and a statewide survey to understand the main issues affecting the community in order to draft our legislative priorities for the year.

2023 Proclamations

MCLA worked with the Office of the Governor and Lt. Governor to draft the Latino Heritage Month Proclamation and translate it into Spanish.



2024 LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY PRIORITIES



LIFELONG LEARNING (EDUCATION)

In the area of Education, our priorities focus on the needs expressed by our students and their families which include student support from a diverse teacher workforce, remove barriers to higher education, and mental health supports in order to feel safe at school. Progress has been made in closing the achievement and opportunity gaps that disproportionately impact Latinos, but much work remains to further narrow them.

Teachers of Color:

- Working in collaboration with the three Ethnic Councils to develop joint opportunities to engage MDE and OHE about plans for increasing BIPOC support and strategies for program monitoring/reporting.
- Engage and support PELSB in their efforts to diversifying the teacher workforce in order to reach the state goal by 2040.

Mental Health:

- Advocate for greater cross-cultural competence and trauma-informed practice in educators, staff, and administrations.
- Engage with BARR and MDE to ensure program funds reach school districts in greater Minnesota that have been identified as Racially Isolated schools.

Qualified Interpreters:

Support cultural liaisons and community navigators by working with MDE alongside LAN to ensure proper interpreting staff is hired to provide these services and move away from relying on bilingual support staff. Support in opening the lines of communication among districts and Latine families to ensure districts have a plan when families request language assistance.

College Access:

Joint collaboration with Ethnic Councils to create policy strategies for increasing racial diversity and equity in higher education after affirmative action.



2024 LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY PRIORITIES



BELONGING AND INTEGRATION

The Council strongly supports state-level immigration policies that are humane, nondiscriminatory, and consistent with America's longstanding values of inclusion and integration.

- The North Star Act (Rep. Feist and Sen. Fateh): MCLA supports The North Star Act, a legislation supported by immigrant advocates that would prohibit state and local law enforcement from using state resources for the purpose of civil immigration enforcement. This legislation does not prohibit collaboration based on investigating criminal activity.
- Office of New Americans (ONA): Guide and advice in the implementation of ONA priorities, ensuring that new Americans have access to vital resources and necessary services for their success.
- Latino/e Museum of Minnesota: Advocate for the establishment and funding of the first dedicated Latino Museum in Minnesota to preserve and celebrate the rich cultural heritage and contributions of the Latino/Latine community.



HEALTH & WELLBEING

Continue supporting grants for Alzheimer's public information campaigns and aging programs for Latino seniors.



2024 LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY PRIORITIES



DEMOCRACY AND VOTING RIGHTS

The health and survival of our democracy rests in our ability to protect and expand voting rights, helping new Americans to be active citizens and strengthen their communities in every district of the state. We support:

- The ability to eligible voters to rank their candidates in local elections through Ranked Vote Choice
- An Independent Redistricting Commission Bill that will draw district maps that are equitably for voters and communities of color to ensure parity in policy outcomes and economic investments into communities statewide.
- Provide funding to organizations that prepare immigrants for naturalization and promote civic integration.
- Advise the Secretary of State of studies or reports that look at securing and expanding voter and election information, resources, and other.



SUMMARY OF 2024 METRICS OF SUCCESS

LEGISLATIVE AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

LEGISLATION DRAFTED AND/OR COLLABORATED WITH

9 pieces of legislation
(6 passed)

LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY/ POSITION STATEMENTS

25 position statements or
committee testimonies

150

COMBINED MEETINGS WITH
LEGISLATORS, LEGISLATIVE AIDS, AND
EXECUTIVE BRANCH AGENCIES

PUBLIC OUTREACH

1 virtual town hall

1 new bilingual informational webpages
to inform about new comers

1 1 Day at the Capitol
(200 participants)

Various public presentations during
Latino Heritage Month

MEETINGS WITH CONSTITUENTS, COMMUNITY LEADERS, AND LOCAL ORGANIZATION

100 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

SUMMARY OF 2024 METRICS OF SUCCESS

PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH AND IN-HOUSE DATA ANALYSIS

REPORT: 2025-26 COMMUNITY PRIORITIES ANALYSIS:

This bilingual publication released in November 2024, was the result of three community listening sessions in Greater Minnesota (Rochester, Willmar, and Moorhead) and a public survey. The report includes policy recommendations and is a comprehensive review of the challenges and opportunities in the Minnesota Latino communities.

2024 FACT SHEETS FOR LEGISLATORS

2025 FACT SHEETS FOR LEGISLATORS

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)
- MDH's Latinx/Hispanic Latino Leaders bi-weekly meetings
- MDE's Migrant Services Consortium
- Minnesota Latino Leadership Alliance (MiLLA) co-convened by MCLA with Latino led organizations to advance a Latino Public Policy Agenda
- LatinoLEAD EAT Group in Education
- MNCare Expansion Roundtable
- Operation New Minnesotans Welcome
- Latina Hairstylists meetings to implement new Hair Technician License
- MnDOT Corridor Planning (PAC)
- 2025 Minnesota Joint Disparity Study (Equity in Procurement)

A 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. Since then, MCLA has hosted and conducted 29 listening sessions in locations with a high percentage of Latino residents, or remote communities in Greater Minnesota, such as Moorhead or Crookston.

This past summer, since all of MCLA's legislative priorities were achieved during the 2023-2024 legislature, MCLA decided to focus on the implementation of the new legislation, including having a good understanding of how the new programs, services, and benefits enacted will have a positive impact in the community. Making sure that the information flows to the community will help with reducing disparities and bridge gaps between state government and the community.

With that purpose, thanks to the work of our contracted Latina-owned firm, Light House Global (LHG), MCLA's staff planned and convened three listening sessions in Rochester, Willmar and Moorhead. The MCLA's staff also helped conduct a community priorities survey prepared by LHG that shed light in diverse topics and solutions and allowed us to understand the level of information that communities have regarding the passing of historic laws in 2023-2024. The policy recommendations included in the report "[2024 Community Priorities Analysis: Community Voices Illuminating our Path Forward](#)" 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.



Community members during MCLA's listening session in Willmar

Staff also planned and invited community to a virtual Town Hall meeting style with several state agencies that presented about the implementation of the newly passed laws in 2024. Approximately 77 community members attended. Our Council members, Representative Maria Isa Pérez-Vega, and Marco Hernández, from the Attorney General's Office, addressed the participants, in addition to representatives of the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry (DLI), the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) and the Office of Higher Education (OHE).

FY25 EXPENDITURES (AS OF DECEMBER 2024)

General Fund **\$680,000**

Expenditures

Full Time	\$144,313.03
Part Time - Seasonal.....	\$0.00
Overtime and Premium Pay	\$4,458.44
Other Employee Cost	\$2,158.75
Space Rental and Utilities	\$8,542.50
Printing and Advertising.....	\$395.40
Professional Technical Services.....	\$18,775.82
Communications.....	\$1,153.88
In State Travel	\$2,789.77
Out of State Travel	\$1,304.83
Employee Development.....	\$525.00
State Agency Prof Tech Services.....	\$0.00
Central MNIT Services	\$7,965.19
Agency Specific MNIT Services	\$1,200.00
Supplies.....	\$0.00
Equipment.....	\$556.24
Other Operating Costs	\$4,781.00
Equipment-Non capital.....	\$0.00
TOTAL EXPENDED	\$200,880.32

BOARD MEMBERS



ALEJANDRA BEJARANO
Congressional District 1



ROSA PÉREZ
Congressional District 2



ELVIS RIVERA
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MARCO HERNANDEZ
Vice Chair, Congressional District 4



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Executive Director



KATYA ZEPEDA
Legislative and Policy Director
-Education -



DAVID CAMPANA
Legislative and Policy Director
-Economic Development-



ESTEFANÍA JAUREGUI
Office Manager

OTHER STAFF IN 2024

Luis Argueta
Communications Director

We also want to thank our two 2024 Policy Fellows: Antonio García (University of Minnesota), and Alan Schulz (Macalester College), for their work and ideas supporting our work this year.

THANK YOU!



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



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MINNESOTA
COUNCIL ON
LATINO AFFAIRS



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