



For Immediate Release

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State Latino Commission Voices Unanimous Opposition To Ohio House Bill 654

Lack of facts and final Federal action is cause for concern

Columbus, OH – October 17, 2006 – With a unanimous voice vote, the Ohio Commission on Hispanic/Latino Affairs passed a resolution against Ohio House Bill 654, the so-called “Illegal Alien Act” and its companion Ohio Senate Bill 368, while calling for a study about the “origin, nature, scope, and contributions of Ohio’s immigrant population.”

When citing the reasons for its opposition, the resolution states three main points. The first reason is that no one in Ohio knows how big the immigrant population is and where they live. With out this information, the statement from the Commission cautions that “an increase in public expenditures, the creation of new government bureaucracies, and the imposition of regulatory burdens on Ohioans and Ohio businesses is premature...”

Commission Chairman Humberto Gonzalez said “Actually, we hope to send a clear message that we seek further dialogue with members of the General Assembly. We want to work together for a solution that will benefit all Ohioans. Although we feel that there are some very important missing facts at this time, we want to uncover those facts. Before we can pass a bill about Ohio’s growing immigrant population, we should know how many there are, how they make Ohio a better place, and how the growth poses challenges to our communities.”

The second point of contention is that the hasty “implementation of state-level public policy affecting immigrants may impinge upon Federal supremacy and conflict with the end result of a dynamic and changing Federal immigration policy environment.”

“We are not saying ‘no’ to the General Assembly. We are saying ‘wait, let’s size things out before we start spending money.’ We are saying ‘let’s do something good – together – for all Ohioans’,” added Ezra C. Escudero, Director of the Ohio Commission on Hispanic/Latino Affairs.

Finally, the resolution asserts that “serious concerns (have been raised) by business, industry, faith-based organizations, civil rights advocacy groups, and well intentioned, well informed residents across the state of Ohio who are against HB 654 & SB 368.” These concerns are about “...threats to civil rights, increases of racial profiling, and encouragement of... discrimination against all immigrant groups.”

Commission Chairman Gonzalez added “it is critical that we meet to seek constructive, well-thought out solutions based upon solid information.”

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Based upon early estimates by the Office of Hispanic/Latino Affairs, the costs of HB654 will be over \$1 million per year for the two new state offices, training for law enforcement officials, and for the process of negotiating the agreements called for between the Ohio Attorney General and the United States Bureau of Immigration & Customs Enforcement.

For additional information, including a copy of the resolution or a copy of the cost estimates of HB 654, contact the Office of Hispanic/Latino Affairs at 614-466-8333.

About the Ohio Commission on Hispanic/Latino Affairs

The Ohio Commission on Hispanic/Latino Affairs was established in 1977 with the purpose to advise, connect, and build. The commission has the statutory mandate to “advise the Governor, members of the General Assembly, and the various State departments and agencies” on issues affecting the Latino communities across Ohio. In addition, the commission works to connect those same communities by “gathering information about, and disseminating information to” Hispanic Ohioans. Finally, the commission helps to “build” the capacity of community organizations who serve to help integrate Latinos, recent immigrants, and new Americans into the fabric of community life in Ohio. The Board is comprised of eleven Governor-appointed Commissioners, and the Office is lead by the Director who serves at the pleasure of the Board.

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