



# New York State Assembly Puerto Rican/Hispanic Task Force



Hon. Carl E. Heastie, Speaker  
Hon. Marcos A. Crespo, Chairman

Fall 2016

## EXCELSIOR!

### An Overview of Our Accomplishments

A Policy Update by the NYS Assembly Puerto Rican/Hispanic Task Force



#### Chairman's Message

*We have come a long way since the Great Recession, a period that almost destroyed our national economy while inflicting great physical and financial*

*pain on Latino communities across our country.*

*Over a third of all the wealth accumulated by Latino families evaporated; unemployment rates soared for Latinos even as they held the highest labor participation rates of any group; foreclosures, shady real estate practices and predatory lending left countless without a home and homeless; and anti-Latino policies led to hundreds of thousands of deportations that left over 150,000 children born in the U.S. without parents and in the custody of states' foster care systems.*

*Yet, even in the face of these community deteriorating forces, Latinos have pushed forward to rebound from the harm done and continue to strive to improve their communities and expand opportunities for their families.*

*The New York State Assembly Puerto Rican/Hispanic Task Force, under the leadership of Speaker Carl E. Heastie, has worked diligently over the past two years to strengthen our state's economy, improve our schools, expand access to health care and a college education, build and protect affordable housing, and improve opportunity for all New Yorkers, including the almost 5 million Latinos which call the Empire State their home.*

*This policy update outlines some major accomplishments in key areas that measure our socio-economic progress. While many other issues need to be resolved, considerable progress has been made on many fronts. I, along with my colleagues, am pleased to share this information with you in the hopes that together we can scale and sustain this progress to share that prosperity with the larger community while we strive for a culture of inclusion.*

**Excelsior!**

Marcos A. Crespo

#### A Budget That Puts Families First

As in the 2015-16 state budget, the 2016-17 state budget included measures to revitalize the economy and support families. The \$146.7 billion plan invests in education, helps lift families out of poverty, allows more young New Yorkers to get a college education, cuts taxes and helps grow the state economy. With the strong support of the Assembly Puerto Rican/Hispanic Task Force, the final state budget was a bold step forward for the families of our state. Paid family leave and an increase in the minimum wage have long been priorities of the Assembly Majority, and New York families will greatly benefit from these changes.

#### Investing in Our Schools and Our Children

The 2016-17 state budget increases education aid by \$1.47 billion – or 6.3 percent – for a total of \$24.7 billion, representing the largest investment in education in New York history and highlighting the Assembly's commitment to helping every child achieve their full potential. Additionally, the budget allocates \$175 million to transform struggling and high-needs schools into community schools, which provide a number of crucial services to students and their families, including mentoring, health care, summer programs and job training. By converting these schools into community schools, they can be turned into valuable centers that provide much-needed support to at-risk youth and their families and address the issues associated with poverty, as well as help prevent the schools from being taken over by the state.

This year, the budget also created the New York State version of the federal My Brother's Keeper initiative, which was established by President Obama to address the opportunity gaps faced by minority males. Under the leadership of Assembly Speaker Carl E. Heastie and Task Force member Assemblyman Michael Blake, the goals of this initiative will be funded via \$20 million to implement the Board of Regents' recommendations from its Workgroup to Improve Outcomes for Boys and Young Men of Color. Recognizing the importance and lasting benefit of early childhood education, the budget provides \$807 million for continued implementation and development of the statewide universal pre-kindergarten program. With the help of the PR/H Task Force, the budget also provided an additional \$10 million to help English Language Learners (ELL). Alarming low graduation rates for this group requires additional resources to improve success rates.

#### Giving New Yorkers a Raise

With projections that as many as 50% of all current jobs are threatened by automation in the near future, ensuring a living wage and working towards a guaranteed basic income when such automation takes hold of our economy is of paramount importance.

Workforce issues are a key focus of the Puerto Rican/Hispanic Task Force. Currently Latinos make up 18.5% of our state's workforce and by 2025 one of every two new entrants into the labor force will be a Latino. Every With poverty and income disparities on the rise, the state budget recognized that action on these problems was needed and it increased the minimum wage to help lift working families out of poverty and give them a pathway to the middle class. The minimum wage increase reflects the disparate costs of living and economic realities in various regions of the state. As a result, there will be different phase-in periods for upstate and downstate communities. In New York City, the minimum wage will increase to \$11 at the end of 2016, followed by \$2 increases each year after, reaching \$15 an hour on Dec. 31, 2018. For New York City businesses with 10 or fewer employees, the minimum wage will increase to \$10.50 at the end of 2016, followed by \$1.50 increases each of the following years and reach \$15 on Dec. 31, 2019.

## Delivering on Paid Family Leave

No New Yorker should have to choose between collecting a paycheck and taking care of a loved one. Paid family leave will ensure that workers can take time off to care for a newborn or sick relative without having to sacrifice their financial security. The budget includes a paid family leave provision that, when fully phased in, will afford employees 12 weeks of paid leave per year to care for a new child or family member in need. The measure will be funded through a small weekly employee contribution and offer up to two-thirds of an employee's salary during their absence, not to exceed two-thirds of the statewide average weekly wage.

The policy will be implemented at a gradual rate, starting in 2018 with 8 weeks of paid leave offered at 50 percent of weekly income; in 2019, the benefit will increase to 10 weeks, and in 2021, employees will be able to take 12 weeks of paid leave at the full two-thirds of weekly pay. Workers will be eligible for the program after six months of employment.



*Assembly Member Crespo joins Assemblyman Francisco Moya, Assemblyman Michael DenDekker, Senator Jose Peralta, church leaders, and the Ecuadorian community for a vigil in memory and support of the many lives lost after the recent and deadly earthquake to hit the Republic of Ecuador. This coalition of civic and political leaders resembles the organization behind the push to pass the New York State Dream Act.*

## Task Force Member Bills • Signed into Law

*With an eye on the wide range of issues impacting New Yorkers, the Assembly Puerto Rican/Hispanic Task Force members authored the following bills signed into law in 2015 & 2016 with the strong assistance of State Senator Jeff Klein and supported by Senators Avella, Boyle, Croci, Gallivan, Peralta, Ranzenhofer, Ritchie, and Rivera:*

**A 5991-A Crespo** – With over \$1 billion in energy costs incurred by school districts, this new law establishing the School Energy Efficiency Collaborative Act of 2016 – SIGNED CHAP. 403 Laws of 2016

**A 6575 Crespo** – Provides for a deduction from personal gross income for expenses incurred in the adoption of a child in the foster care system – vetoed memo 207

**A 6846 Crespo** – Provides for the reduction of property/casualty insurance premiums on residential real property when the insured occupant completed a homeowner natural disaster preparedness, home safety & loss prevention – vetoed memo 233 but SIGNED as part of 2016 adopted State budget

**A 6506-A Crespo** – With both obesity and asthma rates topping the charts in Latino communities this new law provides for respiratory disease and obesity managements at DOH – SIGNED CHAP. 469

**A 6731 Crespo** – Relates to price gouging of medicine – Passed Assembly for 5 straight years. EpiPen price gouging and increases in diabetes medications puts this bill as a top priority for pressure on Senate to pass in 2017.

**A 6857-A Crespo** – Signed Chapter 336 of Laws of 2016 – Relates to definition of “for cause” in instances of revocation of licenses to prevent staged auto accident fraud – SIGNED CHAP. 336 of Laws of 2016

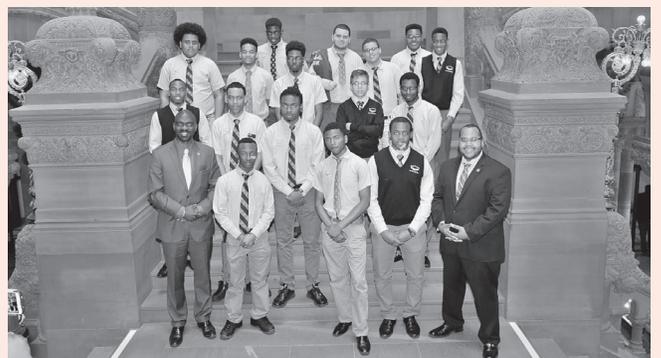
**A 7650 Crespo** – Relates to the waiver of a kitchen incubator processing license fee due to high demand for commercial kitchen access by growing number of food entrepreneurs establishing business in NYS – SIGNED CHAP. 367 of 2016

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*Assemblyman Marcos A. Crespo stands on the steps of New York City Hall alongside New York State Senators Jeff Klein, Adriano Espaillat, and The National Supermarket Association (NSA) to voice strong concern with the New York State Department of Health's proposed revisions to the NYS WIC Program (specifically Title 10 of the NYCRR, Sections 16-1.1 and 161.13). Such changes would adversely impact access by women, infants and children to the mandated nutritional component of the WIC program, and further place overly complicated criteria for participation by vendors in the WIC program, ultimately reducing available outlets for access to services by WIC enrollees.*

*With unanimous support of the Assembly Puerto Rican/Hispanic Task Force, both houses of the State Legislature passed legislation to correct this problem and the legislation will be delivered to the Governor for his signature or veto by December. **Assembly Bill 9648/S.8077** by **Assemblyman Crespo** and **Senator Klein** provides that participants in the special supplemental nutrition program for women, infants and children may receive foods from any vendor approved by such program, including infant formula.*



*Assemblyman Victor Pichardo (far right) and Assemblyman Michael Blake meet with Eagle Academy School students to discuss their concerns and the school's efforts to empower young men of color to become future leaders.*



*Assemblywoman Carmen Arroyo, a longtime advocate for strengthening bilingual education and improving funding for school-aged English Language Learners (ELLs), has also authored legislation which has passed the Assembly to help address the high rates of asthma throughout New York. While the*

*Bronx remains the county with the highest asthma and asthma hospitalization rates in New York, other regions of the state are seeing increasing rates of this disease.*

*Her legislation (**Assembly Bill 9821**) would establish a Minority Coordinating Council on Asthmatic Affairs within the Department of Health to assess the asthma risk factors for the minority citizens of our state, counties and regions; identifies the existing barriers to quality asthma treatment and care among minorities; develops action steps for addressing care issues; launches a state-wide asthma awareness campaign to educate our citizens about the disease; and requires annual reporting by the Department of Health.*

## Fighting Poverty & Economic Insecurity

In May of 2015, the Assembly Puerto Rican/Hispanic Task Force released a report documenting the high rate of poverty faced by the elderly. With few exceptions, Latino elderly have the highest rates of poverty of all ethnic and racial groups in all regions of New York State. A subsequent report by the New York State Wide Senior Action Council documented that as 80% of Latina elderly are living in poverty.

**The report can be found here:** <http://assembly.state.ny.us/comm/PRHisp/20150430/index.pdf>

The problem could and will get much worse for New York's elderly and not just for Latino elderly because today the majority of workers have jobs that do not provide a retirement savings plans like a pension or 401-K account.

Access to a workplace retirement savings plan differs substantially by race and ethnicity. AARP research has found that about 67 percent of Hispanic workers, 52 percent of African Americans, and 36 percent of Asian Americans lacked access to an employer-provided retirement plan. Minorities accounted for about 47 percent (1,649,000) of the roughly 3,507,000 employees without a workplace retirement plan in New York.

To correct this problem with major negative implications for our State, Assemblyman Robert Rodriguez has introduced legislation (**Assembly Bill 8332-A/S.6045-D**) which establishes the New York State Secure Choice Savings Program. This proposal is strongly supported by the members of the Assembly Puerto Rican/Hispanic Task Force.

The program would create a self-sustaining retirement savings option through an automatic IRA payroll deduction for private sector

employees who currently have no way to save for the future through their workplace. The savings account would be portable and the employee could opt out at any time. New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio has initiated such a program but the state must do the same.

The proposal would give millions of New Yorkers access to savings options through their place of employment so they could build their own economic security and reduce the high rates of elderly poverty now so pervasive in our state.



*Assemblyman Robert Rodriguez discusses education issues with student and school administrator in East Harlem while attending a Back to School Event.*

## Governor Creates Group to Tackle Lack of Diversity in State Agencies



A top priority for the Assembly Puerto Rican/Hispanic Task Force has been to improve the hiring and promotion of Latinos in the state government workforce. A package of 9 proposed laws have been introduced to address this issue including legislation by Assemblyman Luis Sepulveda (**Assembly Bill 8041**) which would require a career portfolio application process option to increase diversity in the workforce instead of relying exclusively on high-stakes exams.

These efforts have prompted Governor Andrew Cuomo to establish the Advisory Council on Diversity. The group which encompasses legislators and key state agency heads has held a series of meetings across the state and is expected to release a strong and practical action plan supported by the Governor that will address this decades-old problem.

*More information on this issue at "Hispanics Need Not Apply" – <http://assembly.state.ny.us/comm/PRHisp/20151116/index.pdf>.*

**Here are three points from the above report that clearly show the problem:**

- In 2014, there were fewer Hispanics working in state government than 10 years before;
- In 2004, 6,515 Hispanics composed 3.8% of the state workforce of over 168,000; and
- In 2014, only 6,142 Hispanics were employed out of over 131,000 state agency workers.

## Task Force Member Bills • Signed into Law ...continued

**A 8166-A Crespo** – Requires used motor vehicle dealers to have a \$20,000 surety bond if they sell 50 or fewer cars a year, and a \$100,000 surety bond if they sell more than 50 a year to prevent consumer fraud by shady used car sales operations – SIGNED CHAP. 342 of Laws of 2016

**A 8176-B Crespo** – Passed both Houses in 2016 but not yet sent to the Governor – Requires report on the impact of a tax deduction for expenses attributed to the adoption of a child in foster care to help improve adoption rates for children now lingering in state foster care custody.

**A 9067-B Crespo** – Enacts provisions to expand the kinds of wellness programs that can be offered to enrollees of health insurance programs to combat obesity and related diseases – SIGNED CHAP. 180 of Laws of 2016

**A 4347 Davila** – In continued efforts to combat domestic violence this law requires that translations and notifications regarding family offense interventions be in other languages – SIGNED CHAP. 432

**A 8009 Moya** – Relates to penalties for unregistered dealers – SIGNED CHAP. 516

**A 5917-A Pichardo** – Prohibits smoking tobacco products in and around after-school programs while in operation - SIGNED CHAP. 100

**A 4487-A Ramos** – Requires annual reports to contain information specific to veteran-owned small businesses - SIGNED CHAP. 523

**A 7728 Rivera** – Extends until July 1, 2020, the expiration of the authorization to the New York Zoological Society to offer a free one day admission to the zoological park – SIGNED CHAP. 39

**A 2409 Rodriguez** – Relates to conditions for granting scaffolding permit renewals on construction projects involving public housing provided by the New York city housing authority – SIGNED CHAP. 520

**A 731 Rozic** – To improve the welfare of children in foster care, this new law relates to foster home decertification, application for recertification, authorization for non-renewal, and other notices - SIGNED CHAP. 142

**A 7814 Sepulveda** – Permits certain inmate releases on a Thursday instead of Friday to ensure next-day reporting - SIGNED CHAP. 270

**A 5548 Sepulveda** – Passed both Houses – not yet sent to the Governor – Relates to translation services for inmates appearing before the parole board.



*Assemblyman Philip Ramos, Chair of the Angelo Del Toro Puerto Rican/Hispanic Youth Leadership Conference, speaks to students from across New York State during the March 2016 Mock Session in Albany. Assemblyman Ramos has also worked to ensure religious institutions on Long Island are strengthened so they can continue their work to combat poverty and hunger. The Governor recently signed two of his proposals (Assembly Bills 9135-B and 9138) into law with regards to these matters.*

## Improving College Success Rates & Diversity

With new data showing that Latino high school students are enrolling in college at higher rates than their Caucasian counterparts, The Puerto Rican/Hispanic Task Force has renewed its focus on working to improve access, affordability and college completion for Latino students. The Task Force successfully advocated for additional funding for the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion of the State University of New York (ODEI). The office was created in 2007 after almost a year of discussions and fact finding travel between then SUNY Chancellor John Ryan, former Task Force Chair Peter M. Rivera, United University Professions (UUP) Latino Affairs Chair Dr. Raul Huerta and the senior staff of the assemblyman and the chancellor. ODEI operates all of SUNY's diversity programs but its budget had been stagnant for years, even as more demands for supporting programs and larger numbers of Latinos and other minorities are enrolling in SUNY.

In one of his first duties after assuming the Chairmanship of the Puerto Rican/Hispanic Task Force in March of 2015, Assemblyman Marcos Crespo initiated a set of meetings and conversations with SUNY Chairman of the Board of Trustees H. Carl McCall on improving faculty and staff diversity on its 64 campuses.

Presently less than 4% of SUNY professors and professional staff are Latino. Simultaneously, the Task Force, with the leadership of Speaker Carl E. Heastie, helped secure an additional \$600,000 for the Minority Graduate Scholarship program. In September of 2015, Assemblyman Crespo was invited to address the SUNY Board of Trustees on the Task Force's diversity priorities. The day after that meeting the SUNY Board approved a ten-page diversity policy for all its campuses; making the new diversity efforts the most comprehensive of any state college system in the nation. Under the leadership of Chairman McCall, these new policies will improve diversity in its education system that serves almost 500,000 students each year.

The new policies give unprecedented authority and input to the Chief Diversity Officer positions which will be created on each campus and requires regular reporting to the legislature on diversity policy goals and achievements, improves the recruitment mechanism to help increase the number of minority faculty and staff on all its campuses, and makes college presidents accountable for improving diversity on campuses.

In addition, SUNY has agreed to work with the Task Force on STEM outreach and enrichment options for pre-college students and to help identify top talent for college president slots and senior positions in the college system. SUNY Chancellor Nancy Zimpher, who created a diversity workgroup headed by SUNY Vice Chancellor and Provost Alexander Cartwright and SUNY Vice Chancellor and Chief Diversity Officer Carlos N. Medina, has been a national leader in ensuring that SUNY is well positioned to serve the growing number of minority students. Currently over 123,000 of the 455,000 SUNY students are minorities.

## SUNY & PR/Hispanic Task Force Host Latino Leadership in Higher Education Summit

As the continued collaboration between SUNY and the Assembly Puerto Rican/Hispanic Task Force strengthens to address mutual concerns, both organizations hosted a Latino leadership summit on September 16, 2016. The summit was attended by over 130 academics, college administrators and policymakers for an all-day discussion and presentations by national experts on issues of diversity in college leadership. Currently seven college president positions are available in SUNY. The need to diversify top management of the 64 campus system is a top focus. There has never been a Latino college president in SUNY.

Emerging populations and the diversity of New York State's changing demographics highlight the need for Latino leaders at all levels of faculty, staff and administration in higher education. A deliberate effort to recruit, retain and promote this population requires immediate consideration by all higher education stake holders. Advancing Latino talent through SUNY is imperative to "building institutional capacity" as are all efforts that will contribute to the success of Latino in leadership positions.

SUNY System Administration and the New York State Legislature recognize the importance of brokering opportunities that leverage intellectual capital where Latinas/os themselves can become leaders. The summit helped to develop ideas and helped put into action innovative strategies with the goal of creating the structure of opportunities that improves the Latino leadership pipeline. For more information on the search process to fill vacant leadership positions in the SUNY system contact Dr. Carlos Medina, Vice Chancellor and Chief Diversity Officer at 518-320-1189.



Vice Chancellor Medina



SUNY Chairman McCall



Chancellor Nancy Zimpher



SUNY Provost Cartwright



For more information on any of these issues, contact Guillermo A. Martinez, Legislative Director of the NYS Assembly Puerto Rican/Hispanic Task Force at [Marting@NYAssembly.gov](mailto:Marting@NYAssembly.gov)