



For Immediate Release
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Press Contact
Marlene Peralta. 646.601.4267

Latino Education Advocacy Coalition Launches New Statewide Campaign Focusing on the Needs of Multilingual Learners, the Students with Lowest Graduation Rate in NYS

*As part of the initiative they released a new report: : **Investing in Our Future: A Multilingual Learner Policy Agenda for New York State** outlining priority recommendations aimed at closing the alarming achievement gap among multilingual students*

New York, NY – The Latino Education Advocacy Directors (LEAD) Coalition launched a new statewide campaign today to push for an increased investment from New York State in its multilingual learners (MLL), to ensure that their academic needs are met. MLLs are students who speak or understand a language other than English and speak or understand little or no English.

Currently multilingual students lag staggeringly behind their peers, in academic achievement, and even more so when it comes to graduation rates. In 2017, the four-year MLL dropout rate superseded the four-year graduation rate.

The campaign called “Invest in Our Future, kicked off officially on Tuesday with the release of an eye opening report called: **Investing in our Future: A Multilingual Learner Policy Agenda for NYS**, that outlines the challenges and a series of recommendations aimed at closing the achievement gap among this high need student population.

The Latino Educational Advocacy Directors (LEAD) coalition consists of leading educational advocacy organizations from across the state committed to improving Latino academic outcomes and opportunities in New York State.

According to the new report findings, multilingual Learners in New York State continue to fall behind in graduation rates compared to other students due to lack of adequate focus on needed resources and funding. For example, the population of MLLs across New York State has grown nearly 20% over the last ten years. Yet, the supply of certified Bilingual Education and English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) teachers has not grown accordingly. This inadequate attention has translated into a staggering dropout rate of 30%, that surpasses their graduation rate of 27%.

*“We cannot afford to ignore the needs of New York State’s multilingual learners (MLLs) any longer,” said **José Calderón, President of the Hispanic Federation (HF)**. “As this report shows, the failure of our state to provide adequate resources and supports for our MLLs has created a full fledged educational*

crisis, where the MLL four-year dropout rate is actually higher than the MLL four-year graduation rate.” This is simply unacceptable and requires immediate action on the part of our state leadership. Together, we must act with bold purpose to provide the funding and appropriate resources our MLLs need to succeed academically. I applaud the work of the LEAD Coalition in elevating this issue and providing the necessary recommendations and advocacy to spur change across the state, so that all students receive a quality education that puts them on the pathway to postsecondary success.”

The report calls for immediate action from New York State Legislators and sets a series of recommendations to close the achievement gap. The coalition understands that the educational success of MLLs will require a collective effort, reliable funding and high quality monitoring.

The report outlines six main priority recommendations to close the MLL achievement gap that include:

- Fund a Targeted Initiative to Increase Graduation Rates for MLLs
Increase the Number of Certified ESOL and BE Teachers in General and Special Education
- Grow Investment in Academic Supports and Parent Engagement for MLLs
- Increase Socio-Emotional Supports Provided to MLLs
- Form a New York State Commission to Advance the Achievement of MLLs
- Earmark a Minimum of \$85 Million annually for MLLs over a Three Years Phase in of the Total \$4.1 billion Owed in Foundation Aid

Carmen Diaz-Malvido, Chief Executive Officer, ASPIRA of New York said: *“ASPIRA of New York continues to advocate on behalf of English Language Learners to protect and ensure access to quality education. We seek a collaborative, active partnership with the New York State Legislative Leadership to fund long overdue New York State Education Department projects and policies meant to increase achievement opportunities and ensure equitable resource allocations for Multilingual Learners. Achievement and graduation rates of Multilingual Learners have declined significantly due to lack of investment, it is time to take action and engage in leveling the playing field for all New York City youth.”*

Nancy Villarreal de Adler, Executive Director, New York State Association for Bilingual Education (NYSABE) said: *“Education without appropriate supports for those in need is NOT equitable. Appropriate supports cannot be provided without targeted funding. Therefore, as we advocate for equity in education for New York State’s multilingual learners, we urge our elected officials to prioritize the urgent educational needs of these students and ensure appropriate funding to sustain their academic and socio-emotional success. It is a moral obligation.”*

Joe Luft, Executive Director of Internationals Network said: *“Multilingual learners bring many and varied assets to schools in New York State. As the leader of an organization supporting public secondary schools in New York State serving thousands of MLLs, I see MLLs’ strengths as well as the challenges that they face. To build on students’ strengths while supporting them in meeting these challenges, New York State must provide the resources to ensure that there are enough well-prepared, dedicated educators who can work in alliance with community organizations to meet MLL’s needs. With proper resources and supports, MLLs can and do reach their full potential. New York State will benefit from their success.”*

Maria Bautista, campaigns director for the Alliance for Quality Education said: *“There is great need among our students, needs that are not met under the current underfunding of the Foundation Aid, which is specifically designed to prioritize high needs schools. The state needs to step up and fully fund the \$1.66 billion for 2019-20 that the State Board of Regents determined that is necessary to meet student need, move toward programmatic improvement, and over three years provide the full \$4.1 billion that the state currently owes to schools. Black, Brown and students in poverty, many of who are ELLs or MLLs are owed two thirds of the \$4.1 billion. We cannot keep losing generations of students because of the state’s unwillingness to fund the students’ constitutional and moral right to a great education.”*

Asenhat Gomez, Director of El Puente said: “Multilingual Learners make our schools rich in diversity and culture but unfortunately as a City and State, we have failed to provide the appropriate resources and culturally relevant instruction they deserve. Our multilingual learners are an asset and it is time their backgrounds and experiences inform what they learn in the classrooms in order for them to feel empowered and supported. Education is in its true form and act of liberation and it can’t be separated from the experiences of the community; therefore the challenges our youth face outside the classroom can’t be ignored, instead our schools need to become hubs where students and families alike can come together, be supported, celebrated and learn from each other. It is the responsibility of the City and State to allocate fair/equitable resources to the education of our multilingual learners and see our youth for what they are: brilliant young people who given the right resources/opportunities and guided by staff that is properly trained will continue to transform NY. El Puente is glad to be a part of the LEAD coalition and to have the opportunity to advocate for and with our youth.”

Created by the Hispanic Federation, the LEAD coalition works to highlight and address the educational needs of Latino students in the following ways: identifying and supporting effective practice; public policy advocacy and research; and the advancement of a shared educational agenda.

As part of the campaign launch, the coalition, the campaign launch the LEAD Coalition also unveiled a new website: **latinoleaders.org** and a public forum featuring advocates and state education officials on the state of multilingual learners who answered questions from parents attending. The list of education leaders included, Dr. Luis Reyes, Regent, NYS Board of Regents, Angélica Infante-Green, Deputy Commissioner, New York State Education Department, Joe Luft, Executive Director, Internationals Network, Rita Rodriguez, Director, Immigrant Students’ Rights Project, Advocates for Children and Evelyn DeJesus, Vice President for Education United Federation of Teachers (UFT).

For more information about the “invest in our future” campaign visit: latinoedleaders.org

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LEAD Coalition Members Include:

Advocates for Children of New York
Alliance for Quality Education
Adelante of Suffolk County
Amber Charter School
Avenues for Justice
ASPIRA of NY
Casita Maria Center for Arts and Education
Catholic Charities Community Services
Coalition for Hispanic Family Services
Committee for Hispanic Children and Families
Community Assoc. of Progressive Dominicans
El Centro del Inmigrante
El Puente
ExpandedED Schools
Hispanic Federation

Ibero-American Action League
Internationals Network for Public Schools
LatinoJustice PRLDEF
Latino U College Access
LSA Family Health Service
Masa-Mex Ed
National “I Have a Dream” Foundation
NYC Coalition for Educational Justice
NYS Association for Bilingual Education
Operation Exodus
Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow
The Opportunity Network
Parent-Child Home Program
Project Hospitality
Zone 126

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