Coalition of Organizations Launch the Latino Climate Justice Framework Project

23 Leading Latino Organizations Come Together to Take On the Climate Crisis and Achieve our Environmental Liberation

Washington, DC - Following on the momentum of the Latino climate priorities sign-on letter delivered to Congress and the Administration this summer, nearly two dozen leading Latino/a/x organizations are joining together today, the final day of Hispanic Heritage Month, to announce the launch of a project to develop and expand this letter into a comprehensive and inclusive Latino Climate Justice Framework (LCJF).

The Latino climate priorities letter advocates for improving and advancing the robust climate portions of President Biden’s Build Back Better agenda and emphasizes that this agenda must prioritize frontline and communities of color. Latinos across the nation disproportionately bear the brunt of climate change – from air, water, and soil pollution to living in communities more vulnerable to climate-driven events – and disproportionately face economic and health disparities.
As the coalition of 23 Latino organizations works together to develop the LCJF, members will build upon the significant work of frontline climate and environmental justice leaders to highlight the disproportionate impacts that the climate crisis has on Latino communities across the country and build a broad climate justice framework will ensure Latino communities' priorities are elevated and protected.

Disproportionate impacts that have not yet been sufficiently addressed in most existing climate crisis plans include:

- Access to linguistically & culturally appropriate information and services;
- Immigration and citizenship solutions, barriers, and disempowerment;
- Accessibility to culturally competent emergency response systems;
- Addressing the root cause of Latin American climate devastation and migration;
- Equity and a resilient future for Puerto Rico and the territories;
- Economic hardship, affordable housing, and food insecurity;
- Gender based economic, health, and educational disparities;
- Access to tools for economic opportunity, including broadband;
- Limited access to adequate health care, health insurance, and social services;
- Farmworker, construction laborer, and other frontline worker safety and protections;
- Investments in green spaces and climate resilient infrastructure in vulnerable communities;
- Accountability that government program dollars are being properly and sufficiently invested in frontline communities;
- A broad and equitable incentive program for renewable energy, community solar, and affordable electric vehicle purchasing with a charging network built for all;
- Incentivizing educational opportunities for low-income students to enter the climate and environmental fields;
- National-scale funding for outdoor education programs for low-income youth; and
- Expanded access to decision-making processes, including those provided under NEPA, for environmental and climate change projects.

The United States and our planet are facing an unparalleled and unprecedented era of concurrent and urgent crises. Environmentally, economically, and socially, the ways in which we exist in our world and relate to one another are being challenged. Latino and frontline communities are disproportionately harmed by the extant and emerging crises.

While many excellent -- and inspirational -- policy frameworks have been developed to address the climate crisis, ours will focus explicitly on how the interconnected climate, economic, health, and social crises are affecting Latino communities across the US and the territories.

The coalition of organizations coming together to develop this Latino framework to address the climate crisis includes: Azul, Chispa, Comité Dialogo Ambiental, Corazon Latino, EcoMadres, Farmworker Justice, GreenLatinos, HACU, HECHO, Hispanic Federation, Latino Outdoors, LULAC, MANA, Mi Familia Vota, NHCSL, NHMA, Poder Latinx, Presente.org, Sachamama, T.E.J.A.S., UnidosUS Action Fund, UPROSE, and WCVI.
Carlos Ochoa, Azul’s National Policy Associate.

“President Biden must address a confluence of crises: the climate crisis, COVID-19, racial and immigrant justice, health inequities, and environmental injustice. One fact these issues have in common is their disproportionate impact on communities of color. In order to confront these issues, the Latino community needs to coalesce and advocate for its interests, especially as the President’s Build Back Better agenda goes through negotiation. This is why Azul is proud to join and assist with the launch of the Latino Climate Framework alongside other leading Latino organizations to help advance priorities rooted in valuable perspective.”

Ruth Santiago, Climate Advocate and Attorney, Comite Dialogo Ambiental, Inc

The more frequent and intense hurricanes brought on by the climate crisis threaten Puerto Rico, the Caribbean and the United States eastern seaboard. One lesson learned after the onslaught of Hurricane Maria is that Puerto Rico must transform its electric system away from centralized fossil-fired energy generation and transmission towards community-based and sited renewable energy infrastructure. The Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority, the Government of Puerto Rico and the Biden Administration are called upon to invest the historic amount of FEMA disaster recovery funds already allocated for the Puerto Rico electric system in life-saving rooftop solar and battery energy storage systems as one of the first big tests of their commitment to tackling the climate crisis. Federal financing of new gas-fired power plants and centralized transmission and distribution systems will not afford Puerto Rico energy independence and viability going forward and would be a waste of taxpayer funds.

Felipe Benitez, Executive Director of Corazón Latino

“Latinos carry a tradition of deep respect and reverence for Madre Tierra while simultaneously being deprived of the full benefits that our environment provides. Climate change is very personal to us as we take action in our everyday lives to protect the environment while living in areas where the air is contaminated, the water is not potable, green space is lacking, and where we are at high risk of extreme weather events. As our population and engagement in the political process booms, we want to see policies that crystalize our longstanding connection with nature. We demand immediate action from our elected officials at every level of government whether representing Central American migrants, Puerto Ricans being forced to the mainland, or Latinos with multi-generational histories in our states whose lives are being uprooted as a result of climate change.”

Cinthia Zermeño Moore, National Lead, EcoMadres

“EcoMadres is proud to be part of a national coalition of organizations working hand-in-hand on a more inclusive climate framework to guide our country. Our community’s voice, struggles and perspective are too often excluded from climate action conversations. Yet Latinos are disproportionately affected by climate change because of where we work, live and go to school. And Latino children are 60% more at risk of having asthma attacks exacerbated by air pollution, and 40% more likely to die from an asthma attack than their white counterparts. It’s why it’s crucial that frontline communities and environmental justice leaders are heard. As our country stands ready to Build Back Better, we must make sure our communities’ priorities are meaningfully represented and protected.”

Bruce Goldstein, Executive Director, Farmworker Justice

“Farmworkers, who are predominantly Latino, are already bearing some of the most devastating impacts of the climate crisis. We cannot adequately respond to this threat
without addressing the longstanding, structural issues affecting these workers and their families."

Mark Magaña, Founding President & CEO of GreenLatinos

“The Latino community is resilient, but we are hurting right now. The Covid-19 pandemic is disproportionately hurting communities of color and we are being devastated by climate catastrophes. As we continue to negotiate and fight for the President’s critical Build Back Better agenda, we are undertaking a necessary and painstaking process rooted in the values of our community and culture to ensure that our communities’ priorities and needs are identified and met. We look forward to working with elected and appointed leaders across the country to incorporate these critical priorities into all our communities. We need action NOW and we have no choice but to stand up and fight for the environmental liberation we desperately need.”

Laura M. Esquivel, Vice President of Federal Policy and Advocacy at Hispanic Federation

“Build Back Better is a rare opportunity to create a better future for our communities, address past inequities, and create the processes and structures to ensure our children and communities are healthier and can thrive. Now is the time to act on reversing or mitigating the impacts of climate change and charting a more equitable path for frontline communities. We can do this by investing and electrifying mass transit, which benefits working families most, creating incentives to make access to renewable technologies like solar more affordable, providing oversight to ensure FEMA’s policies do not perpetuate inequity, and making sure clean, renewable energy and modernizing the electric grid are done in an equitable manner. As we continue to try and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, we must recognize the inequalities it spotlighted in our society and work to remedy these injustices.”

Camilla Simon, Executive Director Hispanics Enjoying Camping, Hunting, and the Outdoors (HECHO)

“Hispanic and Latinx people are among the most active guardians of nature and consistently rank climate change and other environmental threats as top concerns in their communities across the country. Yet our voices are often excluded from conservation policy discourse that directly impacts our communities and way of life. The Latino Climate Justice Framework Project ensures that our communities’ priorities are represented and protected so that we can create long-term, effective solutions that will focus on the intersection of climate and social justice. Within the framework, recommendations such as access to broadband, investment in green spaces, and expanded access to decision-making processes are deeply personal to HECHO, and we have long advocated for measures such as the Land and Water Conservation Fund, expanded access to broadband, and NEPA for communities to identify equitable solutions to the climate crises.”

Luis Villa, Executive Director, Latino Outdoors

“Latino Outdoors is honored to be a part of this coalition to develop a framework for comprehensively addressing the climate crisis. Undoubtedly, this existential threat disproportionately impacts Latinx, other communities of color, and low-income populations. However, if left unchecked, the adverse impact will not be selective of certain communities. It behooves us all to find solutions that boldly and courageously consider root causes, improving the ways in which we collectively manage our
resources, both natural and societal, to ensure a sustainable world for all communities in
the here and now and into the future.”

Sindy Benavides, Chief Executive Officer, LULAC
“The effects of climate change are wreaking havoc on our Latino communities. The
COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated issues fueled by environmental racism and has
deepened injustice and inequity. This is a pivotal moment for us to join forces and
advocate for transformative climate change policy and help our communities build back
better and stronger. LULAC is committed to working alongside other Latino leaders to
gain protections for clean air, renewable energy, and clean water for all of our
comunidades.”

Amy Hinojosa, National President and CEO. MANA
“The urgency of the climate crisis has already manifested in devastation for Latino
communities and we must meet this moment with courage and bold solutions. Our
communities are suffering and we will not relent until lawmakers take significant action to
address the climate crisis and provide relief for those in need.”

Katara Burrola, Colorado Environmental Organizer, Mi Familia Vota
“Our Latino Community is forever strong and rooted in our sense of togetherness
throughout both our successes and our tribulations. Yet, we realize that our community
has been treated unfairly through the lense of Environmental Justice and will fight for
such inequity to end. Throughout President Biden’s crucial work with the Build Back
Better Agenda, we will not only strive to ensure that Latinos have access to resources for
family, work, health, and language, but also to environmentally safe livelihoods. We are
excited to help steer this pivotal legislation in a direction that is just for all Latinos,
alongside our allied elected officials throughout the country. We also look forward to
reaching the future of clean air, water, and land for our people and the biodiversity which
supports us. Juntos.”

Dr. Elena Rios, President and CEO - National Hispanic Medical Association
“NHMA strongly urges Congress to support climate justice programs in Build Back Better
to protect the lives and wellbeing of our communities”

Kenneth Romero, Executive Director of NHCSL:
“The legislator members of the National Hispanic Caucus of State Legislators have been
leading the fight for state bills and laws that address many of the policy changes that this
coalition advocates for: from translation services to outdoor worker protections; from air
pollution control to electric vehicles; from a resilient smart-grid to a net-zero emissions
plan that leaves no workers of any communities behind, including Puerto Rico. On their
behalf we have also called for similar federal policies and others that address climate
change in Latin America, call for acting in concert with Mexico to preserve in perpetuity
the southern border conservation ranges and ecosystems, and call to provide equitable
access to broadband and electric vehicles. The fight for just climate policies is existential
for Latinos, and we are proud to join this coalition.”

Yadira Sanchez, Co-Executive Director of Poder Latinx
“The Latinx community is on the frontlines of our climate crisis and the COVID-19
pandemic has shed light on the disparities we already knew existed. Extreme heat,
hurricanes, droughts, floods, and other catastrophes are making everyday life difficult
across the country for our community in addition to the pollution and poor infrastructure such as old water pipes and crumbling roads and bridges that we live with on a daily basis. We deserve a fighting chance to save our climate and prevent further damage to our Madre Tierra. That's why we're advocating for the Build Back Better agenda to be adopted in Congress and pushing our legislators to negotiate equitable environmental justice policies."

Carlos Zegarra, Executive Director, Sachamama:
"We have an opportunity to build back better, a future where communities come together, under universal shared values, and move us into a clean and regenerative future where we can all live healthy lives and thrive to the best of our abilities. To achieve this, we need to understand that we need each other and ensure the climate strategies we implement respond and benefit everyone."  

Rafael Collazo, Executive Director, UnidosUS Action Fund
“Latinos are passionate about protecting the environment for the health and economic prosperity of generations to come. UnidosUS Action Fund works to expand the political power of Latinos to have their vision for a real investment in climate change reflected in the final Budget Reconciliation package.”

Elizabeth Yeampierre Executive Director, UPROSE
“A historic legacy of discrimination, extraction, and racism put Black, brown, indigenous, and communities of color on the frontlines of the climate and COVID-19 crises- the impacts exacerbating systemic marginalization. To operationalize a true Just Transition, those on the frontlines of the crises must be at the forefront of the solutions. Our communities have the climate solutions to address energy, water, food, transportation, housing, jobs, and health. This commitment is a testament to our collective brilliance and the necessity to work in collaboration.”

About

Azul is an environmental justice organization working with Latinos and grassroots communities to protect coasts and the ocean. Founded in 2011, Azul has developed –and executed– groundbreaking ocean conservation policy victories.

Corazón Latino is a national non-profit organization that seeks to generate social, environmental, and conservation initiatives that foster natural resource stewardship. Corazón Latino mobilizes the passion, love, unity, solidarity, and resources of individuals, communities, organizations, and government entities to advance the common good. Visit us at http://www.corazonlatino.us.

Comite Dialogo Ambiental, Inc. (Dialogo), is a community environmental group composed of residents of the Municipality of Salinas and the Guayama Region and organized as a nonprofit corporation under the laws of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico since 1997. The purposes of the organization are to promote the general welfare of the communities it serves through education and capacity building of residents concerning the adverse impacts of human activities on the ecologic balance of natural systems and the importance of restoring the environment and promoting conditions under which human beings and the environment can exist in harmony to fulfill economic, social and other needs of present and future generations.
**EcoMadres** is a program of Moms Clean Air Force which educates, engages, and empowers Latina moms to have conversations with lawmakers about the environment’s effect on our children’s health. For more information, go to: http://momscleanairforce.org/ecomadres or follow us on Twitter @EcoMadres_, Instagram @_EcoMadres_.

**Farmworker Justice** is a national advocacy organization for farmworkers. FJ founded in 1981 is based in Washington, D.C. and collaborates with organizations throughout the country to empower farmworkers to improve their wages, working conditions, occupational safety, health immigration status and access to justice. For more information visit the Farmworker Justice website at www.farmworkerjustice.org and follow on Twitter at @FarmwrkrJustice.

**GreenLatinos** is an active comunidad of Latino leaders, emboldened by the power and wisdom of our culture, united to demand equity and dismantle racism, resourced to win our environmental, conservation, and climate justice battles, and driven to secure our political, economic, cultural, and environmental liberation.

**The Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU)**, founded in 1986, represents more than 500 colleges and universities in the United States, Latin America, Spain, and school districts throughout the U.S. HACU is the only national association representing existing and emerging Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs). The Association’s headquarters are in San Antonio, Texas, with regional offices in Washington, D.C. and Sacramento, California. This year, HACU celebrates its 35th Anniversary since its founding.

**Hispanics Enjoying Camping, Hunting, and the Outdoors (HECHO)** is dedicated to fortifying our deep connection to our nation’s diverse landscapes and fostering strong, culturally-rich communities connected to nature and each other by making sure our voices are heard in conservation policy decision-making.

**Hispanic Federation** was founded in 1990, Hispanic Federation supports Hispanic families and strengthens Latino institutions through grantmaking and direct services in the areas of education, health, immigration, civic engagement, economic empowerment, rebuilding a resilient Puerto Rico, and the environment.

**Latino Outdoors** inspires, connects, and engages Latino communities in the outdoors and embraces cultura y familia as part of the outdoor narrative, ensuring our history, heritage, and leadership are valued and represented.

**The League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)** is the nation’s largest and oldest Hispanic civil rights volunteer-based organization that empowers Hispanic Americans and builds strong Latino communities. Headquartered in Washington, DC, with 1,000 councils around the United States and Puerto Rico, LULAC’s programs, services, and advocacy address the most important issues for Latinos, meeting the critical needs of today and the future. For more information, visit https://lulac.org/.

**MANA, A National Latina Organization® (MANA),** founded in 1974, is a national grassroots membership organization with chapters, individual members and affiliates across the country, dedicated to leadership development, community service, education, and advocacy for Latinas. MANA represents the interests of Latina women, youth and families on many of the major issues in the public sphere, particularly in the areas of education, health and well-being, financial literacy, equal and civil rights, and immigration reform.
**Mi Familia Vota** builds Latino political power as a national civic engagement organization that unites Latino, immigrant, and allied communities to promote social and economic justice through citizenship workshops, voter registration, and voter participation. Mi Familia Vota has operations in Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Nevada, and Texas.

**NHCSL** is the preeminent organization representing the interests of the over 425 Hispanic state legislators in the United States, including Puerto Rico, with leadership from across the nation. Its mission is to serve as a catalyst for joint action on issues of common concern to all segments of the Hispanic community, including, pertinently, infrastructure, the environment, labor, education, economic empowerment, housing, civil rights and healthcare, and to coordinate efforts with sister U.S. Hispanic organizations throughout the country. More information, including policy statements, is available at www.nhcsl.org.

**National Hispanic Medical Association** - Established in 1994 in Washington, DC, the National Hispanic Medical Association (NHMA) is a non-profit association representing the interests of 50,000 licensed Hispanic physicians in the United States. The mission of the organization is to empower Hispanic physicians to lead efforts to improve the health of Hispanic and other underserved populations in collaboration with Hispanic state medical societies, residents, and medical students, and other public and private sector partners. Visit nhmamd.org to learn more.

**Poder Latinx**’s mission is to build a political wave where Latinx communities, immigrants, and people of color are decision-makers in this country’s democracy.

**Presente.org** is the nation’s largest online Latinx organizing group — and the nation’s premier Latinx digital organizing hub — advancing social justice with technology, media, and culture. Build Power. Change Culture. ¡Stay Presente!

**Sachamama** is an organization working to build support for a clean energy economy for all, and cultivating sustainable attitudes, behaviors & lifestyles. Through culturally relevant initiatives, storytelling, and media engagement strategies, we are informing and activating communities to advocate for healthy, more resilient cities, while developing a nurturing movement that supports self-exploration, diversity, and civic participation.

**T.E.J.A.S.** is dedicated to providing community members with the tools necessary to create sustainable, environmentally healthy communities by educating individuals on health concerns and implications arising from environmental pollution, empowering individuals with an understanding of applicable environmental laws and regulations and promoting their enforcement, and offering community building skills and resources for effective community action and greater public participation. Our goal is to promote environmental protection through education, policy development, community awareness, and legal action. Our guiding principle is that everyone, regardless of race or income, is entitled to live in a clean environment.

**UnidosUS Action Fund (UnidosUSAF)** is a Latino advocacy organization that works to expand the influence and political power of the Latino community through civic engagement and issue-based campaigns. UnidosUS Action Fund takes the courageous policy visions outlined by our sister organization, UnidosUS, and works to make them a reality.

**UPROSE** Founded in 1966, is Brooklyn’s oldest Latino community-based organization. UPROSE is an intergenerational, multiracial, and black and indigenous women of color-led organization working at the intersection of racial justice and climate change through advocacy, community engagement, youth leadership, and cultural artistic expression.
The William C. Velásquez Institute (WCVI) is a non-partisan public policy analysis organization chartered in 1985. WCVI (originally the Southwest Voter Research Institute) is a spinoff of the legacy organization Southwest Voter Registration Education Project (SVREP) founded by the late Latino icon Willie Velásquez. Willie correctly foresaw that Latino voters would inevitably overcome their political exclusion and needed to develop their policy and governance capacity. WCVI has a long-standing record working on environmental issues, including the LA River and its Eco Intern Program developing a cohort of future stewards of the environment.

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