

April 14, 2022

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen
Chairwoman
Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce,
Justice, Science, and Related Agencies
Room S-128, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jerry Moran
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce,
Justice, Science, and Related Agencies
Room S-128, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Shaheen and Ranking Member Moran:

On behalf of [UnidosUS](https://www.unidosus.org), I write to urge you to craft and advance a Fiscal Year 2023 Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Subcommittee Appropriations bill that funds critical programs and initiatives that would help advance equity, inclusion, and civil rights for our nation's 62 million Latinos¹ and their families.

UnidosUS, previously known as the National Council of La Raza (NCLR), is the nation's largest Hispanic civil rights and advocacy organization which has built a stronger country by creating opportunities for Latinos for more than 50 years. Through its unique combination of expert research, advocacy, programs, and an Affiliate Network of nearly 300 community-based organizations across the U.S. and Puerto Rico, UnidosUS simultaneously challenges the social, economic, and political barriers at the national and local levels.

For too long Latinos have been disproportionately excluded from key federal investments. Structural racism and inequitable federal funding have contributed to lagging economic, education, housing, and health outcomes among Latinos. Unfortunately, political polarization and misinformation further undermine the civil, human, and voting rights of Latinos and other historically marginalized communities. We urge you to advance a FY2023 appropriations package that roots out discrimination within our federal agencies and funds key Department of Justice programs that will meaningfully advance racial equity

- **\$3.5 million for the Recognition and Accreditation program at the Department of Justice.** Funding would increase staff capacity to address the backlog of pending applications from nonprofit organizations that provide immigration services. Due to insufficient staffing, the DOJ's application processing timeline has increased from between two and four months to up to a year. While cases are trapped in the backlog, organizations are unable to provide new legal services or expand their capacity. They

¹ The terms "Hispanic" and "Latino" are used interchangeably by the U.S. Census Bureau and throughout this document to refer to persons of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central and South American, Dominican, Spanish, and other Hispanic descent; they may be of any race.

struggle to retain volunteers and to provide accurate information on grant applications and reports. With additional funding, organizations will be able to better manage their programs and provide life-changing counsel to more low-income immigrants.

- **Fully fund the defense of civil rights across federal agencies.** Expanding the scope, staff, and financial resources of civil rights offices will help to more swiftly resolve cases of discrimination. Specifically, funding the creation of an office of civil rights within the Federal Trade Commission would protect the civil rights and privacy of consumers in traditional and digital markets.
- **Increase funding for federal agencies to promote voter participation in accordance with the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA) and the March 2021 Executive Order on Promoting Access to Voting.** Agency-specific activities, such as those included in the [Fact Sheet](#) “Biden Administration Promotes Voter Participation with New Agency Steps,” should be maintained in off-cycle years to maximize voter engagement and registration.
- **Require the regular collection of disaggregated racial/ethnic data across state and local agencies from recipients of law enforcement grants.** Too often we have witnessed abuses committed by law enforcement officials against people of color. We urge Congress to condition any grants awarded to law enforcement agencies by the Office of Justice Programs (OJP) on a recipient agency’s consistent collection and reporting of disaggregated ethnic data on, at minimum, fatal interactions with police. Further, we encourage grants awarded under the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistant Grant (JAG) program, Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) grants, and others to prioritize technical assistance for state and local law enforcement agencies to establish data collection and reporting processes.

Thank you for your consideration of our Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Subcommittee Appropriations funding requests. With your help and support, the Department of Justice will be better equipped to protect the civil rights of Latinos and other marginalized groups and more effectively facilitate their full inclusion in our nation’s spending priorities and society.

Sincerely,

Eric Rodriguez
Senior Vice President
Policy and Advocacy
UnidosUS