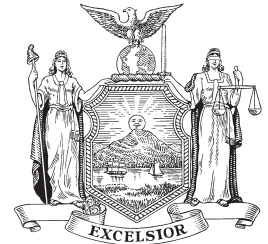


IN THIS ISSUE

- Task force meetings on health and education pages 2-3
- Somos El Futuro Spring 2013 Conference page 4



NEW YORK STATE PUERTO RICAN/HISPANIC TASK FORCE



Sheldon Silver, Speaker • Félix W. Ortiz, Chair

Message from the Chair



Dear Friends,

It has been a great honor to serve as the Chair of the New York State Puerto Rican/Hispanic Task Force and I look forward to continuing our work in the upcoming Legislative Session.

This past spring, we hosted a successful conference in Albany, NY where over 500 people attended including elected officials, corporate, business, and union leaders to discuss numerous issues of importance. An outcome of the Spring Conference led our Task Force to continue discussions by holding Town Hall meetings in communities around the state. Hispanics from across the state were connected through webcasts.

We are also proud to have hosted the first Youth Town Hall meeting where students were able to interact with elected officials, giving them the ability to ask questions, and get advice on how to become more involved in their communities. The Youth Summit was a resounding success, with workshops on how to run for office, financial literacy, and education. The next Youth Town Hall meeting will take place at the 2014 Spring Conference where we expect to surpass the success we had this past year.

Our Task Force meets weekly during the Legislative Session, welcoming guest speakers that include policy experts in health, labor, education such as Chancellors, Commissioners, Governor's staff and public advocates. The outcomes of these meetings and our policy positions are available to the public.

This newsletter provides additional information on the events and activities that the Task Force has been involved with, as well as upcoming events. If you would like any additional information, please feel free to contact the Task Force office at PRHTF@assembly.state.ny.us.

I look forward to hearing from you!

Sincerely,

Félix W. Ortiz, Chair
New York State Puerto Rican/Hispanic Task Force

If you would like to be added to our mailing list, please email PRHTF@assembly.state.ny.us.

About the Puerto Rican/Hispanic Task Force

The New York State Assembly/Senate Puerto Rican and Hispanic Task Force was created to address the issues pertinent to the growing Puerto Rican/Hispanic community in New York State.

The following goals were set forth for the Task Force:

- Establish a legislative program addressing social and economic issues of concern to the Hispanic community.
- Foster cooperation between legislators, as well as state and city officials in understanding issues of concern and in seeking ways to improve services to the Hispanic community.
- Research and evaluate proposals that may affect the Hispanic community of New York State.
- Evaluate current programs to determine their effectiveness in reaching the Hispanic community.
- Serve as a conduit of information for the Hispanic community on issues before the federal, state and local governments.
- Involve local people and community organizations in workshops, discussions, and public hearings in order to develop a comprehensive agenda that will address the issues of concern of the Hispanic community.

- A total of **43 members** make up the **2013-2014 Task Force** including: **16 executive members of Hispanic descent** and **27 members who are working together to achieve these goals.**

Task Force meetings on health and education

- On April 23, 2013, the NYS Assembly/Senate Puerto Rican/Hispanic Task Force met with New York State Health Commissioner Dr. Shah who described to Task Force members a five-year plan to reduce \$34 million in Medicaid costs while still improving the quality and access of the service. He explained three main steps to achieve this goal: first, to move all members and services to care management, second, to expand fully integrated options and lastly, to enroll all members into fully integrated plans.

Care management is not simply traditional mandatory managed care in which states rely solely on insurance companies. The vision is that virtually every member of the program will be enrolled in some kind of care management organization; some will be health insurance companies, while others will be provider-based plans uniquely designed to meet the needs of special populations.

The new Health-Home program will ensure that hospitals, nursing homes/rehabilitation centers, and primary care physicians communicate regarding each patient. The purpose of this is to avoid patient re-admittance to hospitals and adverse symptoms resulting from ingesting conflicting medication from two different physicians. In the



Assemblyman Ortiz introduces NYS Health Commissioner Dr. Shah.

past, health care providers would receive payment on a fee-for-service basis; the Health-Home program would ensure that physicians receive payment according to the quality of care and their mutual collaboration.

Additionally, Commissioner Shah shared with the Task Force a new regulation that has been enforced by Governor Cuomo, which mandates hospitals to report sepsis, the number-one cause of death in hospitals. He believes that research and reporting on this condition can help save the 7,000 lives per year that are taken by sepsis. Moreover, he informed Members that the flu vaccination would be mandatory for health care providers/workers.

He also discussed a new initiative that requires local hospitals to go into the community to evaluate the needs of the people. Commissioner Shah pointed out that there are 96 district areas with health care shortages, most of which have a high population of minorities. He spoke about a program called “In-Person Assister,” in which a person would be paid to go out into the community and find people without health care and enroll them, if they qualify. Dr. Shah advised all Task Force members to regulate the hospitals in their districts to ensure that their constituents are being served properly by their local hospitals.



NYS Health Commissioner Dr. Shah explains initiatives the NYS Department of Health has in place.

- Task Force members also met with **Dr. Jaime R. Torres**, Regional Director for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and **Yvonne J. Graham**, Associate Commissioner of the Office of Minority Health and Prevention for the New York State Department of Health to discuss health disparities in the Hispanic community as well as the initiatives currently in progress that would benefit constituents.

Graham addressed the issue of health disparities in minority communities. Health disparities are gaps in treatment and education related to significant health problems striking minority communities statewide. She also stated that, “Health disparities arise because of unequal access to health care in conjunction with social determinants like educational, environmental and behavioral factors.” The Office of Minority Health and Prevention combats health disparities with seven staff members and a budget that is below \$500,000. Graham seeks support for experimenting with models that combine health care with other influential factors, which may lead to the development of new, innovative strategies that reduce health disparities in minority communities.

Torres explained in depth the Affordable Care Act, often times called ObamaCare, and described the multiple benefits of health care reform,



Regional Director Dr. Jaime Torres of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services explains the impact the Affordable Care Act is expected to have on the Hispanic community.

that went into effect on October 1st of this year. The Affordable Care Act increases the quality of life nationwide by:

- Preventing insurance companies from denying children coverage because of a pre-existing condition;
- Mandating health care providers spend eighty cents out of every premium dollar to benefit health care-related activities, as opposed to unreasonable profit accumulation. In fact, if health care providers do not adhere to the “80/20” rule, they are obligated to refund money to consumers or reduce premiums. Last year alone, consumers across New York State were rebated over \$86 million, indicating the effectiveness of this protocol.
- Allowing young adults without job-based coverage to remain under family coverage plans up to the age of 26.
- Expanding Medicaid and making it more accessible to individuals under 65 years of age and below 133 percent of the poverty line (approximately \$14,000 or \$29,000 for a family of four). States will receive 100% federal funding for the first three years to support expanded Medicaid coverage, phasing to 90% in subsequent years.



Deputy Commissioner Yvonne Graham discusses the role of the Office of Minority Health and Prevention.

- On May 7, 2013, Members of the NYS Assembly/Senate Puerto Rican and Hispanic Task Force met with Jennifer Richardson, Director of Governmental Relations for the NYC Department of Education, Dr. Gladys Cruz, Deputy Superintendent of Questar III BOCES, as well as Eva Garcia, Director of the NYC Regional Bilingual Education Resource Network, and Associate Dean and Director of the Center for Educational Partnerships, and Dr. Anita Batisti to discuss the displaced funds for the Regional Bilingual Education Resource Network. At this meeting, Task Force Members were made aware of the ending of the contract for the Intensive Teacher Initiative Program, as well as the impact the possible termination of the programs would have on bilingual and English language learners across the state.



Task Force Members voicing concerns to Jennifer Richardson of the NYC Department of Education.



Assemblyman Peter Lopez discussing the impact of ELL programs with Dr. Gladys Cruz.

Also at this meeting, **Terri Brady-Mendez**, Director of the Intensive Teacher Institute and **Nancy Rodriguez-Rosario**, Director of the Westchester/Long Island Bilingual Education Teacher Leadership Academy, described in depth all of the aspects of both programs and urged Members of the Task Force to meet with the New York State Education Chancellor and Commissioner to prevent the loss of these programs.



Commissioner John B. King, Jr. discusses the disparities within the educational system for English language learners.



Assemblymember José Rivera asks Chancellor Tisch and Dr. Rosa for updates on improvements to ELL programs.

- The NYS Assembly/Senate Puerto Rican/Hispanic Task Force hosted **John B. King**, the Commissioner of the NYS Department of Education, and **Angelica Infante** from the Office of English Language Learners on June 6, 2013.

At this meeting, King and Infante emphasized the importance of minimizing educational disparities in diverse communities throughout New York. The NYC school system is comprised of over one million students, 41% of which speak a language other than English at home, and 14% of which are English Language Learners (ELLs). The five most prominent alternative languages spoken in NY are Spanish (63%), Chinese (14%), Bengali (4%), Arabic (4%), and Haitian Creole (3%). Unattended language barriers may potentially impede students from reaching full academic potential. Therefore, combating these barriers with effective ELL programs is imperative to the academic and professional development of bilingual students.

- Continuing the conversation on the impact of decreased funding for the ELL programs, the Task Force met with New York State Education Department Chancellor Merryll H. Tisch and Dr. Betty Rosa, member of the NYS Board of Regents on June 18, 2013. The discussion focused on the unsatisfactory learning opportunities plaguing English Language Learners (ELLs).

Chancellor Tisch opened the discussion by comparing statewide graduation rates to ELL academic progress. Although high school graduation rates have remained steady in the recent past, ELL graduation rates have dipped 5% despite the \$75 million allocated to bilingual programs annually. Rolling this money into the NY General Education Fund has proved to be an ineffective strategy. ELL progress is not properly reported and accountability becomes an issue because of vague resource management. ELLs need separate funding just like they need separate attention in the classroom, and the structure of ELL resource allocation must be adjusted to give these kids a fair shot at a suitable education.

The fight against educational disparities rallies on. To optimize the suppression of such disparities, New York must continue taking proactive measures that strengthen the ELL learning experience. ELL programs must be reinforced by the extension of Parent and Teacher Preparation programs, Title I School Improvement Grants, the restoration of RBERN, and proper DOE funding.

To address these issues, the Task Force will routinely meet with Chancellor Tisch in an effort to discuss strategies related to proper resource allocation, funding severance, and school day extensions.

26th Annual Somos El Futuro Spring 2013 Conference a record-breaking success



Members of the Task Force address conference participants at the annual gala.



Assemblyman Félix W. Ortiz speaking to students at the Youth Summit Town Hall Meeting.

The theme in this year's Somos El Futuro Conference was "The Time Is Now" to empower our youth, build political empowerment, create civic coalitions, shape our education system, advocate for better housing, help returning veterans, increase language access, reform the immigration system, and much more.

This year, over 500 people gathered from all regions of New York State for the conference. "I am proud to announce that due to the vast attendance of this spring's conference a record number of scholarships, internships and apprenticeships will be awarded," said Chairman Félix W. Ortiz.

The Somos El Futuro Spring Conference also focused on policy issues that affect our country, state, and local communities. Workshops were composed of experts in the economy, health care, immigration, veterans' affairs, policy development, project coordination, housing, mental health, domestic violence, bilingual education, and LGBTQ issues. The panelists provided insight and data, paving the way for currently needed improvements.



Assemblymember Francisco P. Moya leads the discussion at the DREAM Act workshop.

NEW YORK STATE PUERTO RICAN/ HISPANIC TASK FORCE

Sheldon Silver, Speaker • Félix W. Ortiz, Chair

WINTER 2013



Seniors meet with Assemblyman Ortiz at the Annual Senior Luncheon in Albany to discuss issues they face in their communities and how they can continue to be heard.



Presenters discussing new initiatives for workforce development at the Economic Development workshop.