



March 20, 2023

Dear Madam Chair and Members of the Education Finance Committee,

My name is Lillyam Arroyave. I am taking the liberty of addressing you in support of HF 2131 (Rep. Hicks) to provide funding to the Alliance of Chicanos, Hispanics, and Latin Americans (ACHLA) of the Greater Rochester Area, particularly to the ACHLA's "Juntos (Together) Program." As the provider of the program at Rochester Community Technical College (RCTC), I am qualified to share with you its specific aspects.

I was born and received my first college degree in Colombia. I obtained my master's degree in Spanish language and Hispanic culture education from the University of Iowa. This year marks my thirtieth anniversary as instructor of these disciplines at the RCTC. I am also a Board Member of ACHLA.

ACHLA and RCTC initiated the Juntos Program to facilitate the inclusion of Hispanic youth into local mainstream society, both by supporting their academic efforts and by helping socialization with non-Hispanic peers. Social inclusion and academic achievement problems are particularly evident among the children of migrant workers and recent immigrants.

For most of my RCTC career, each year I taught approximately one hundred sixty students. For almost twenty years, (3,200) my students were required to participate in the Juntos Program. To meet the requirement of service learning, each student had to invest four hours per semester. Therefore, approximately 640 hours per academic year, were spent in cultural and academic bi-directional communication. During that time, RCTC students had to meet Hispanic students from Rochester Public Schools and engage them in two-way tutoring. For half of the time, RCTC students would tutor their Hispanic counterparts in academic contents (English, mathematics, health, science, etc.). After that, the role would reverse, and the Hispanic students would provide the RCTC students with the opportunity to learn about Hispanic life and to practice the language. On average, 950 Hispanic youth participated from the Juntos Program per year for the total of approximately students 19,000. Thanks to the generosity of RCTC leadership, the program was held Saturdays for two hours during the school year at the Heintz Center campus. Regrettably, delivery of the program was halted by the pandemic.

Over the years students both from Hispanic students and RCTC students praising the friendships they formed through the Program. We did not test the Hispanic students before and after the program intentionally not to deter them from voluntary participation. However, our experiential evidence has consistently shown positive academic effects. On the other hand, benefits for many of my RCTC students were evident in improved grades, particularly in oral exams. A particularly important outcome of the program has been the strengthening of Hispanic youth's self-esteem and confidence gained through the role reversal when they "taught" their RCTC counterparts. I will be happy to provide more information if needed.

We restarted the Program this semester at a very small scale. To grow it, to attract Hispanic students and maintain it, your support will be critical. Thank you for the attention to my testimony and for the consideration and support of HF 2131.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lillyam Arroyave".

Lillyam Arroyave
Spanish Instructor
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