

HISPANIC DIRECTORS ASSOCIATION  
of NEW JERSEY  
**Building Bridges to a Better Life**

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El Centro Borincano Comunal  
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El Club del Barrio  
Hispanic Affairs Research  
Center Monmouth County  
Hispanic Family Center  
Hispanic Information Center  
Hispanic Institute for  
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Immigration and American Citizenship  
Organization (IACO)  
La Casa de Don Pedro  
Latin American Economic  
Development Association  
Latin American Institute  
Morris County Organization  
for Hispanic Affairs  
Mercer County Hispanic  
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North Hudson Community  
Action Corporation  
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P.R.O.C.E.E.D.  
P.R.A.H.D.  
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Puerto Rican Community Daycare  
Center  
Puerto Rican Congress  
of New Jersey  
Puerto Rican Family Institute  
Puerto Rican Unity for Progress  
SASCA  
Save Latin America  
Servicios Latinos de Burlington County  
Urban Network Organization

# Statement on the FY 2007 New Jersey State Budget: A Latino Perspective

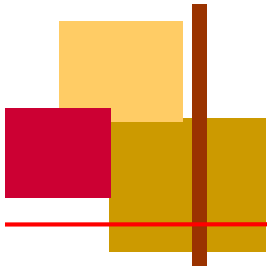
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## **Statement on the FY 2007 New Jersey State Budget**

### **A Latino Perspective**

As Executive Director of the Hispanic Directors Association (HDANJ) I thank you for the opportunity to return again this year to call attention to budget issues for you to consider. Over 700 thousand of New Jersey's most vulnerable come to HDANJ member agencies to receive services and assistance. They represent the full spectrum of New Jersey's poor but because our agencies are organized by the Latino leadership in their communities many are Latinos, often recent immigrants, who struggle to make a better life for their families and the society where they chose to live.

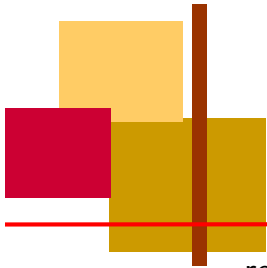
Latinos in New Jersey experience poverty at five times the rate of the general population, and do not receive human services, workforce development training, educational and other services proportional to our needs and rapidly growing portion of the state's population. Governor Corzine has proposed a \$30.9 billion budget that is sensitive to New Jersey's most vulnerable, but we must make sure it does not impose disproportional hardships on the Latino community. We expect our state government to redirect scarce state financial resources to ensure equitable services to the Latino community.

Let me add that HDANJ joins the Coalition for a Moral Budget in asking that all vulnerable people be protected in this budget. Before we take steps that may permanently damage our social fabric, the legislature should consider ideas to enhance revenues such as those forwarded by the Fairness Alliance.

#### **MAJOR INCREASE/ DECREASES**

We need to point out these specific concerns:

1. Abbott Preschools are to increase to reach 43,500 children. These preschools have proved their worth by producing higher test scores for fourth graders. We remind you that 70% of these children state-wide received their preschool education in community preschools. Fifteen hundred (1500) are in HDANJ preschools. DOE's budget management has made it impossible for these preschools to cover the full cost of these programs, which stretches further our



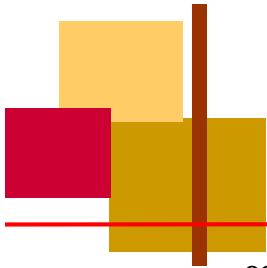
resources. These deficits negatively affect other community programs. If additional resources are not available, then DOE and DHS must make their contracting more flexible, so community preschools can continue to offer cost effective delivery of quality preschool education.

2. Preschool Wrap around Co-Pay This budget once again makes the proposal that the few Abbott parents who have higher incomes and use wrap around services in our preschools pay a Co-pay. The concept is reasonable, but once again the cost of administering and the responsibility to collect this co-pay cannot fall on the community preschools whose budgets are already forcing them to operate at a deficit.
3. Special Welfare Initiatives: The \$2 million reduction in appropriations must not affect DHS's targeted outreach to Hispanics that we fought hard to create.
4. Grant to ASPIRA We urge reconsideration of the drastic \$400 thousand reduction in support of our most important program to assist Latino youths to close the gap in educational performance.

## **CREATION OF DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

By far the most important issue for the vulnerable in the budget is the reorganization of the Department of Human Services to create a new Department of Children and Families. The missions of our member agencies nearly all center on strengthening families. We welcome the opportunity to focus attention on children and to streamline how the State provides children services. Twenty percent of these children live in Hispanic families, and too many live in poverty. My recent experience as co-Chair of the Corzine DHS transition team gave me a great appreciation of the challenge of delivering \$10 billion dollars of services to the population that most needs them. There are three issues we want to emphasize:

1. This reorganization cannot be rushed. There needs to be a transparent planning process that involves key stakeholders to determine how the new department will achieve its goals while the vital services that remain in DHS are not deterred. We already see the danger that the DHS contract HDANJ has executed successfully over the last six years may fall between the cracks. Through our member agencies this contract helped enroll ten thousand children in preschool and assist 500 special need children access services. If it is not renewed, it will place the Hispanic community still further behind in accessing human services.
2. We insist that Children's Services is an area where our community needs an equitable share of services. I have attached a roundtable report HDANJ prepared last year which documents that neither DYFS case management



services or child behavioral services are delivered to Latino children on an equitable basis. When the new prevention thrust started, it simply ignored our communities.

3. The Prevention goals of our child welfare reform plan are absolutely critical and should not be diminished in any way. The top down approach attempted last year to start prevention collaboratives must be corrected. There are many communities where large numbers of Latino children live in poverty at risk. By building on the existing programs of HDANJ member agencies, we can create a seamless and integrated community based management approach that will make DYFS' protective role more manageable and effective. IT MUST HAPPEN NOW.

### **SOCIAL SERVICE BLOCK GRANT AND COMMUNITY SERVICES BLOCK GRANT SSBG/CSBG**

The Budget Summary has an ominous note about the cuts in these block grants in the proposed federal budget. Many of our agencies are direct or indirect beneficiaries of this funding. Again to avoid a collapse of the services for the most vulnerable, it is critical that the State develop contingency plans for whatever the federal budget may produce. I can assure you we are aware of this challenge and will work to avoid this unwise approach to cutting programs for the poor in Congress.

Let me end with a note about the topic of the moment: comprehensive immigration reform. You have heard the footsteps of thousands who are marching and will continue to march until this latest civil rights challenge is addressed in our Congress. You are hearing the footsteps and pleas of the undocumented, but also the great majority of Hispanics and most Americans whose common sense prevails over bigotry. This State must be prepared to deal with the possibility that either we will have to pass stop gap measures such as Driving Privilege Cards (A-2607) and in-state tuition to undocumented resident children. Or our State will face the prospect of finding it in its economic interest to help nearly 500 thousand people to legalize themselves under a new law. PLEASE BE PREPARED. Finally, I urge the legislature in the best interests of New Jersey to pass a resolution to condemn the approach of H.R. 4437, and urge the US Congress to enact comprehensive reform that will unite our country.

Thank you.