

February 17, 2017

## **Ohio Latino Education Summit Cincinnati, OH**

¡Muy buenos tardes a todos!

Es un gran placer estar con ustedes hoy en esta conferencia de latinos de Ohio del año dos mil diecisiete.

Quiero agradecer a la Comisión de Asuntos Latinos de Ohio, la Universidad de Cincinnati, la Universidad de Miami y Prospánica de Cincinnati por su apoyo a esta conferencia.

It's great to be with you today at the 2017 Ohio Latino Conference. [translate to Spanish]

I want to thank the Ohio Latino Affairs Commission, the University of Cincinnati, Miami University, and Prospánica Cincinnati for your sponsorship and support.

I hope everyone enjoyed this morning's sessions. I was sorry I couldn't make time to attend some of

them. We have so much to learn from each other, and opportunities like today are so important as we seek to continuously improve in our efforts to help all Ohio students. Let's thank all the presenters of this morning's sessions for the great work they are doing.

I was particularly intrigued by the student group from Dater High School here in Cincinnati. We don't listen as carefully as we should to the student voice –*la voz de los estudiantes es muy importante*, and it is so important to the effective development and implementation of policies and strategies. Let's thank them and other students in the audience for their willingness to share their perspectives and experiences.

I also want to thank all the teachers that are here today. Teachers are the most important part of the education system. They are our greatest asset. The hard work of education doesn't happen without your commitment and dedication. You are creating our future with the work you do with students. Thank you so much for your service.

¡Feliz Cumpleaños al estado de Ohio!

We are a nation of immigrants. It's something to celebrate! Our diversity makes us strong. Our diversity is our advantage.

I, myself, am the son of immigrants, and I cherish my immigrant heritage. My father was Italian and came to this country in 1946??. His father, like so many immigrants saw America as a land of opportunity after a devastating war. My father had a college education – and likely would have done well in Italy. But he took the chance to chart his future in a foreign land.

I am awed when I reflect on the great courage that was required and the huge risk taken by my father and grandfather to ensure a better future for themselves and family.

My mother's story is a bit different. She is Hungarian – also college educated as a biochemist. She was a refugee who escaped Hungary in 1952 during the period of communist rule. She found herself in Austria and then later in Italy. Finally, in 1954, through the U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program she was provided passage to the U.S. and settled with a family in Allentown, Pennsylvania.

They came here for opportunity, with hope for a brighter future. Of course they found each other....and that was great.

My story is one that has been repeated millions of times in the history of our nation, and our state – and that is repeated even now – every day. I wouldn't trade my growing up with immigrant parents experience for anything. Italian and Hungarian is the best in the world,.....second to Latino food, great music, family get-togethers. My parents may not always have known the American way but we managed and prospered.

People come, looking for opportunity – or a safe haven. They are welcomed by those with a common background. They become productive citizens and contribute to the betterment of the community. They become part of the great melting pot that is our American heritage. Unfortunately...they often encounter obstacles based on their being “different.” But with the help of friends and champions, they persist. They grow to become passionate about their new home and embrace being Americans.

And so, in light of our immigrant heritage, we are called to a special recognition of the needs of new immigrants – and an obligation to make a difference.

We respect that immigrants celebrate and maintain their own heritage. And we are committed to helping them succeed in their newfound home. We become their champions.

My mother and father both came to this country as adults. What helped them succeed was the support of family and friends, the good will and acceptance of communities, employers, and neighbors. The helping hands of those who understood the challenges they faced – and who committed to helping to make the transition easier. Some shared their cultural background – and others did not.

We who gather here are called to play and embrace that supporting role.

What is most notable – and perhaps most joyful – is that our focus is on children. We look into their eyes and we see their vast potential – the desire to play, to discover, to laugh, to be social and part of a loving community.

We feel their anxiety – being in a different place, hearing a different language, not being able to understand. But children have the amazing ability to figure it out; to adapt; to succeed in spite of the most

challenging circumstances – especially if we nurture in them a growth mindset.

Let's face it, we're not in the business of education because it is routine and boring. It's because it's absolutely incredible and totally magical to watch and support a child's discovery and growth.

But education is hard work. What you all learn today reflects best practices and experience. We all know, though, that we don't have it all figured out for our Latino students. And frankly, we don't have it figured out for many of our students, including those with various special needs.

But we also know that the single most amazing characteristic of educators is the desire to always get better. If, as I said earlier, watching children learn is incredible, it is equally as inspiring watching great teaching – and the unceasing quest by teachers and educators to refine and improve their practice. The old saying is so appropriate: the best keep getting better.

So what are some of the areas that need our focused attention.

(Deliberate Understanding) It starts with a commitment to understanding cultural differences.

We must engage with students and their families in the context of their cultural affiliations. We need to commit to developing our own cultural competency – ways to connect, engage and embrace students and their families on their own cultural terms – even if we are culturally different.

(Latino Educators) Our students can benefit if they see more teachers, principals, superintendents and other educators who are Latino. As much as we may aspire for our Latino children to become doctors, lawyers, bankers, scientists – we must celebrate the noble profession of teaching – and encourage and support Latino students to see teaching as a positive and fulfilling career, and to welcome them into preparation programs. No other career makes such a difference in the lives of individuals – or in the success of communities.

(Wraparound services and Trauma-Informed Practices) We know that what a student experiences outside the classroom plays a key role in their ability to function inside the classroom. There are many reasons why students experience stress in their home lives. We are seeing some great strategies being used to address these issue.

Recently in the Columbus Dispatch there was an article that featured three Columbus schools and their trauma-informed practices. Students learn techniques that provide socially acceptable options to calm themselves and maintain focus. Discipline rates are down, and students and parents report a calmer school climate – a better climate for learning.

There are dozens of examples across the state where social services are being included on site at school so that students and their families can have easy access to supports including health, vision, dental and mental health services.

(Career Opportunities) There is a growing emphasis on showing students the connections between education and careers. Career oriented educational approaches frequently lead to a more engaging and relevant learning experience. And they are great preparation for college or direct entry into the workforce.

We need to emphasize the need for our Latino businesses and community organizations to provide internships and work-based learning opportunities for students. Work based learning in settings that provide role models and mentors for Latino students

can be an important inspiration to reaching readiness for career and future education.

(Community and Parent Engagement) We need to open the schoolhouse doors and welcome parents and communities to be stronger partners in the education process. Latino communities are powerful support structures for students. Parents want to be helpful to their children's education – and we can help them do that. Other community members welcome the opportunity to serve as mentors which the state enables through the Community Connectors Program.

(Collaboration) Finally, we have to commit ourselves to on-going collaboration and sharing of best practices – just as we are doing here today. We have to talk about the challenges we face, the obstacles we encounter and the successes we achieve. We need to work together in the never ending search for excellence and effectiveness so that every child can emerge from the K-12 system ready for life, careers and future learning.

Una vez mas, gracias a todos ustedes por estar presentes hoy en esta especial ocasión. Gracias por todo el increíble trabajo que ustedes hacen.

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Espero con mucha ilusión una sólida y continua asociación con ustedes y un diálogo productivo a medida que buscamos la manera de apoyar a cada niño para que alcancen su potencial máximo y por medio de ellos crear un mejor futuro para nuestras comunidades, nuestro estado y nuestra nación.

Once again, thank you for being here today. Thanks for all the great work you do. I look forward to a strong, on-going partnership and dialog as we seek to help every child reach their fullest potential, and create the future of our communities, our state and our nation.