



August 14, 2020
Via Electronic Mail

Mayor Gary Phillips
Members, San Rafael City Council
Members, Marin Board of Supervisors

Re: **Request for Action on Coronavirus Pandemic's Impact on Latinos in Marin County**

Dear Esteemed Elected Officials:

In the current coronavirus pandemic, Marin County has the largest disparity by race in the Bay Area among COVID-19 positive individuals. While Latinos are just 16% of the population, they account for approximately **80% of coronavirus cases**.

We, the undersigned leaders of community organizations in Marin County, respectfully request your immediate and full support to ensure appropriate action is taken to address the dire conditions that the COVID-19 pandemic has created for the low-income Latino community in San Rafael and across the County. We are committed to working with you, your staff, and agency leaders to address these matters with the urgency they require. As the present letter explains in further detail below, the Latino community in our County is experiencing an alarming and disproportionate impact because of the pandemic and related economic factors. Various recent reports and studies across the state and nationally have identified disparate effects in terms of COVID-19 cases, hospitalization, mortality, and the concomitant impact on already critical issues such as housing, employment, debt, economic stability, and food security.

We recognize the many existing efforts and appreciate the resources that have already been deployed. However, the growing number of cases and the severity of the impact has caused us to reach out to you for your leadership in devising a focused effort to address the inequitable impact on the most affected: low-income Latinos.

Given the clustering of so many of the county's cases in the Canal District, we strongly urge County and City leaders to begin by first declaring a *state of emergency*ⁱ for the neighborhood. This will allow for coordinated, expedited implementation of critically needed policies to get the outbreak under control. It will also help to provide the necessary support for recovery and stability. This crisis requires a collaborative effort, and we believe that a task force created, guided, and supported by City and County elected officials will help us arrive at better outcomes. We want quick action to develop an understanding of the conditions in the Canal and to determine priorities for short-, medium-, and long-term actions that must be taken.

As you know, the majority of adults in our Latino communities work in essential industries and sectors, and as such, our resilience and recovery will rely on their well-being and ability to weather the health and economic impacts of the pandemic. We ask that you move now to help lead us toward actions taken in partnership across the community to support our families, friends, and neighbors. We look forward to working with you to ensure that these pressing issues are addressed and respectfully request a response as soon as possible but no later than **August 21, 2020**.

Sincerely,

Omar Carrera
CEO Canal Alliance

Stephanie Haffner
ED Legal Aid of Marin

Chandra Alexandre
CEO Community Action Marin

CC:

California Assemblymember Marc Levine

California State Senator Mike McGuire

U.S. House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi

U.S. Senator Kamala Harris

U.S. Senator Diane Feinstein

U.S. Rep. Jared Huffman, D-California

Regional Director of Northern California, Office of the Governor, Elmy Bermejo

Marin County Public Health Director, Matt Willis, MD, MPH

San Rafael Community Development Director, Paul Jensen

San Rafael City Manager, Jim Schutz

Department of Health and Human Services for the County of Marin Director, Benita McClarin

Statement of Impact and Need: Action on Pandemic's Impact on Latinos in Marin County

Latinos across California are suffering disproportionately from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, at alarming rates, including high rates of co-morbidity and mortality. The context and characteristics of the Latino community in Marin County complicate our ability to fully understand the dynamics involved in these disparities as well as the necessary actions needed to effectively address these conditions. In order to develop effective solutions, and deploy the appropriate resources, and involve the relevant agencies and entities, we need an assessment to provide a comprehensive analysis of what happened and what the solutions are. To address the severe public health impact COVID-19 has had on our community and the related catastrophic economic hardships, we also request the special consideration be given to helping mitigate that impact on access to food, healthcare, affordable housing, job-related services and economic support, now and through our community's recovery.

Deep and Disproportionate Impact

Documentation of the disproportionate impact on San Rafael's low-income Latinos can be found in local news headlines such as, "Nearly 80% of Marin County COVID-19 cases are Latino, largest racial disparity in Bay Area" and includes the following data:

- Latinos make up 16% of Marin County's population, but account for almost 80% of coronavirus cases – the largest racial disparity of any Bay Area County.ⁱⁱ
- Over half of Marin County's cases are concentrated in the Canal.
- The Canal has a positivity rate of 20% -- roughly three times higher than Marin County's average.
- Lucia Martel-Dow, director of immigration and social services at the Canal Alliance, quoted in the press noted that 20% to 30% of tests in the community are coming back positive — far higher than the 7% rate countywide.ⁱⁱⁱ
- The socioeconomic factors that put Latinos at greater risk include lack of access to healthcare, low income, the inability to stop working, preexisting health conditions, and the dense living conditions.
- The local community support network is overextended: "Over the past few weeks, all of the Canal food pantries have seen an increase of at least three times the usual number of participants."^{iv}
- An estimated "14,000 to 15,000 **undocumented people** live in Marin" meaning that "thousands of people ... are not eligible for federal financial programs."^v Even when eligible, many are too afraid to risk seeking help, fearing deportation or the risk of losing the opportunity for immigration status in the future.

Best Practices and Models

A recent [PolicyLink report](#), calling for increased housing support for those impacted by the pandemic, notes that Alameda County acted to protect tenants "from most evictions through September, with a 12-month grace period to pay back rent without threat of eviction."^{vi} Community action in Massachusetts won "one of the strongest eviction and foreclosure moratoriums in the nation." Other state and national examples can help Marin County and the City of San Rafael craft innovative and reliable responses to secure protection and recovery. We know that what is most critically needed is the support and leadership of federal agencies and the current administration. Tragically, we also know we can't count on that help to be timely, sufficient, reliable, or sustained. We must rely on the leadership of state, local, and municipal governments to take on the immense and unavoidable challenge of devising locally-responsive models of action. As the PolicyLink report notes: "Ultimately, we need policies that value people over property. We value people by guaranteeing affordable, safe, and high-quality housing for all regardless of income. We do this by investing in public housing, community land trusts, and housing cooperatives."^{vii}

ⁱ Definition of Local Emergency: "The duly proclaimed existence of conditions of disaster or of extreme peril to the safety of persons and property within the territorial limits of a county, city and county, or city, caused by such conditions as ... epidemic ... or other conditions, ... which are or are likely to be beyond the control of the services, personnel, equipment, and facilities of that political subdivision and require the combined forces of other political subdivisions to combat..." Cal. Gov. Code Section 8558(c).

ⁱⁱ ABC7. 7/22/2020.

ⁱⁱⁱ San Francisco Chronicle "Richer, whiter Bay Area cities got coronavirus testing quickly. Low-income areas didn't." 7/26/2020

^{iv} Marin Independent Journal. "For Marin's Latino communities, pandemic intensifies poverty." 4/25/2020.

^v Ibid.

^{vi} Jamila Henderson. 2020. "Prioritize People over Profits, and Ban Evictions." PolicyLink.

^{vii} Ibid.

Signatories:

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