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THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

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HOUSE BILL

No. 1818 Session of  
2003

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INTRODUCED BY FICHTER, CRUZ, GINGRICH, STETLER, BROWNE,  
CRAHALLA, CURRY, DALEY, FRANKEL, HERSHEY, JOSEPHS, LEACH,  
MANN, MELIO, PISTELLA, REICHLEY, ROONEY, ROSS, SANTONI,  
SAYLOR, STURLA, E. Z. TAYLOR, WATSON AND YOUNGBLOOD,  
AUGUST 15, 2003

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REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS,  
AUGUST 15, 2003

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AN ACT

1 Providing for a Statewide Latino Community Learning Program to  
2 be administered by the Department of Education to the  
3 Pennsylvania Association of Latino Organizations.

4 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
5 hereby enacts as follows:

6 Section 1. Short title.

7 This act shall be known and may be cited as the Barrio Nuevo  
8 Latino Community Learning Act.

9 Section 2. Legislative findings and purpose.

10 (a) Findings.--The General Assembly finds and declares as  
11 follows:

12 (1) Latino communities have faced educational failure  
13 due in large measure to socioeconomic conditions and  
14 language. Latino community-based organizations have long  
15 struggled to ensure mechanisms exist to promote educational  
16 development for students and adults in need of continuing

1 education. Latino communities and the school systems must  
2 become effective partners in meeting the needs of Latino  
3 children as well as developing educational development  
4 programs that enable youth and adults to succeed  
5 educationally.

6 (2) Pennsylvania Latino youth are dropping out of school  
7 in numbers that are disproportionate to their Anglo  
8 counterparts.

9 (3) Few school districts have formulated a plan for  
10 reaching Latino families as part of the No Child Left Behind  
11 initiative.

12 (4) Latino youth continue to be underrepresented in our  
13 systems of higher education.

14 (5) Urban school systems are looking for cost-effective  
15 ways in which to meet the academic needs of their Latino  
16 students.

17 (6) Latino communities are in need of intensive efforts  
18 to promote bilingual and bicultural programs that are  
19 neighborhood based and user friendly in the areas of  
20 conversational English, general education degree preparation  
21 classes, community-based alternatives for adjudicated youth,  
22 and after-school programs for high risk youth.

23 (7) Latino communities face a digital divide and could  
24 greatly benefit from neighborhood-based efforts to promote  
25 computer literacy and software application training.

26 (8) There are significant numbers of Latino adults who  
27 lack a basic education as a result of having left high school  
28 before graduation to work, incarceration at an early age or  
29 language barriers.

30 (9) Pennsylvania Latinos hold the lowest-paying jobs in

1 this Commonwealth.

2 (10) Pennsylvania Latinos are overrepresented in the  
3 correctional systems with little access to appropriate skills  
4 building programs once they have been released.

5 (11) Pennsylvania Latinos are not accessing established  
6 community college systems or four-year colleges at the same  
7 rate as their Anglo counterparts.

8 (b) Purpose.--The purpose of this act is to establish  
9 effective mechanisms through which the PALO can help Latino  
10 community-based organizations to establish and run effective  
11 educational development programs established in the  
12 neighborhood, that are user friendly and have services offered  
13 in a bilingual capability. These small learning centers will  
14 utilize computer technology and Internet-based education  
15 programs for all ages to promote collaborative projects that  
16 ensure the public education system can serve Latino children  
17 equitably by promoting their future participation in  
18 Commonwealth systems of higher education.

19 Section 3. Definitions.

20 The following words and phrases when used in this act shall  
21 have the meanings given to them in this section unless the  
22 context clearly indicates otherwise:

23 "Barrio." The term is used to describe a neighborhood or  
24 community where a significant number of Latinos reside.

25 "Bilingual/bicultural services." Services in the client's  
26 dominant language that take into account cultural and social  
27 dynamics.

28 "Department." The Department of Education of the  
29 Commonwealth.

30 "Latino." A person whose cultural and ethnic identity is

1 from a Latin American or Hispanic background.

2 "Latino community-based organization." A nonprofit  
3 organization where the majority of its governing board is Latino  
4 and where the majority of its client community is based in the  
5 Latino community.

6 "Pennsylvania Association of Latino Organization," or "PALO."  
7 A nonprofit State association serving the needs of member Latino  
8 community-based organization.

9 Section 4. Program.

10 (a) Establishment.--There is established a Barrio Nuevo  
11 Latino Community Learning Program. The department shall  
12 administer the program through the Pennsylvania Association of  
13 Latino Organizations. The department shall administer the  
14 program through PALO to establish operations support for seven  
15 existing Latino Community Learning Centers and to establish  
16 seven additional sites all of which are and will be located  
17 within PALO member Latino community-based centers.

18 (b) Guidelines.--The program shall, at a minimum, include  
19 the following components:

20 (1) Financial assistance through the department for a  
21 minimum of three years in the amount of \$2,000,000 per year.

22 (2) Establishment of a network of neighborhood-based  
23 community learning centers where there is:

24 (i) Effective use of computer technology and  
25 distance learning.

26 (ii) Flexible use of highly trained staff.

27 (iii) Instructional courses which are self-paced and  
28 self-taught.

29 (iv) A flexible schedule to best accommodate the  
30 targeted client community.

1           (v) Technology resources available for use by  
2           various groups of youth and adults.

3           (3) A structure to recover out-of-school youth and  
4           return them to an educational program of General Education  
5           Degree (GED) preparation, regular school programming, or  
6           intensive employment track training.

7           (4) A system to link with the State library and local  
8           school districts to develop cultural resource centers serving  
9           local Latino communities.

10          (c) Eligibility.--The program is open to Latino community-  
11          based organizations that serve the Latino community.

12          Section 5. Effective date.

13          This act shall take effect July 1, 2003, or immediately,  
14          whichever is later.