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**Latino Affairs Commission Launches Educational Campaign
During Mental Health Month**

Columbus, OH - The Latino Affairs Commission launched a campaign to highlight the importance of behavioral health support systems and education for Hispanic Ohioans, a population that has doubled since the year 2000 and constitute 3.7% of the state's population. According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), "while Latino communities show similar susceptibility to mental illness as the general population, Latinos experience disparities in access to treatment and in the quality of treatment they receive placing them at a higher risk for more severe and persistent forms of mental health conditions."

During Mental Health Month, the Commission is working with partners and grassroots organizations to encourage understanding of mental and behavioral health issues, promote emotional well-being practices and suicide prevention. "Prevalence rates of mental illness is higher among Latino Americans born in the United States than they are among foreign-born Latinos, and this is a critical statistic that can't be ignored, since the majority of Latinos in Ohio have been born here, stated Lilly Cavanaugh, Executive Director of the Commission." Structural barriers impact access to mental healthcare, including language, socioeconomic factors, transportation and insurance. Furthermore, Latinos often do not understand mental illness because they do not recognize the signs and symptoms for conditions affecting them and do not know where to turn for help. Stigma, traditional remedies, privacy concerns, mixed status, fear, and language access are barriers that limit access to treatment and quality care.

The Commission is making available bilingual materials, resources and tools through its website (<http://ochla.ohio.gov>) and social media to place valuable information in the hands of Latino consumers. "We cannot hold people responsible for not acting to improve their mental health and wellbeing when they do not understand their problems. We will build capacity, understanding and collaboration to improve their quality of life, which will result in positive outcomes for communities across Ohio," stated Director Cavanaugh. More information about the state of Latinos Mental Health in Ohio is available at the Commission's website [here](#).

The Ohio Latino Affairs Commission (OCHLA) is an organization that advises state government on issues affecting Hispanic Ohioans, connects the diverse Latino communities across the state, and builds the capacity of community organizations so they may better serve the fast-growing Latino population of Ohio.