

House Jobs & Economic Development Finance Division

5/7/20

Testimony for HF 4611 (SF4540)

Dear members of the committee,

My name is Marleny Huerta-Apanco. I am a first-generation American, daughter of immigrants, and a first-generation graduate student currently pursuing a masters in public health at the University of Minnesota.

I have found myself struggling to find ways in which to provide relief and hope to communities in rural Minnesota that do not meet the qualifications in place for unemployment or stimulus checks. I am writing to you all today to advocate for my parents, friends, community members and others who are forgotten, afraid, and feel alone during COVID-19.

I write to you not as a someone who has a public health background, but simply as a daughter worried for the safety and well-being of her family. I come to testify in support of HF 4611 because frankly, no amount of educational attainment will address the gaps that prevent my parents and neighbors from having health and economic equity- unless it is paired with policy.

I write to you because this committee has the power and responsibility to do what is right and while the data is clear about health outcomes due to inaction, I want to tell you about the lived experience occurring right now outside this hearing. Everyone is experiencing the same constricted and uncertain lifestyle that thousands in Minnesota experience because of immigration status. Many Latinos in MN are undocumented and of those most are in meat packing, cleaning, or produce labor. The systemic inequalities that have always been present, are felt more than ever.

U.S born Children and youth including myself are doing our best to not simply pass coursework, but additionally feel pressured to protect their parents and have perfect grades for hope of supporting their families in the future. "Let me go to the store mom" "please don't go see your friends" "let me explain to you what the curve means" "You don't have insurance... if you get COVID-19 you could die". These are some of the conversations I have with my parents. But the reality is that no one should have to feel this burden.

I know the experience of walking around my streets with my father looking for a Wi-Fi connection because we could not afford it. I see children experiencing that same problem because they don't have reliable internet or fancy computers and are getting left behind. I speak with their parents who ask me if they will be deported for driving without licenses to work at essential jobs. They have to choose between risk of COVID or the well-being of their family because sick/paid time off is a luxury for some, but not them.

I get angry seeing my community be unable to get bare necessities because our stores often restock during business hours while they are working. I was there with my family when the news about the trillion-dollar stimulus bill came in and though my parents pay taxes with ITIN numbers, I saw the disappointment in their eyes knowing they would not receive a cent. I see my mother's cleaning jobs being cut, my dad having to work and interact with numerous truck

drivers from different parts of the country, and my brother and I's sudden return home impacting how much we need in food.

I see small measures of aid through non-profits or in states like California, giving some resources to those in the city, while places like rural Minnesota where large populations of Latinos are forgotten. I don't want to simply be a statistic. I want to be heard for those who cannot speak up and write to you because I need your help. I have aspirations for a stronger, more equitable Minnesota, but health equity requires equitable policy, and I hope that you will listen to my story and support this bill. Thank you for your time.