



Letter of Support

Casa Rubén

March 24, 2022

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Susana Hernández Martín - Communications Fellow

Walter Saba - MALVEC Campaign Manager

Caylie Tuerack - Public Engagement & Research Associate

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Dear Montgomery County Council Members -

I write in strong support of Casa Rubén's efforts to create a public-private initiative to provide a mobile medical clinic to connect uninsured, under-insured, and under-resourced children and youth (ages 0-21 years) to healthcare and increase the number of children and youth who receive vaccinations needed for overall health and to enroll in school. Casa Ruben is a non-profit organization that provides comprehensive primary care, vaccinations, referrals to behavioral health care, and HIV and GBLTQ care predominately to low-income people, immigrants, and families of color. During the pandemic, Casa Rubén encountered delays in children receiving their needed vaccinations and that this was a particular issue for newcomer children and children in certain under-resourced zip codes. These delays impacted children's ability to enroll in school. Casa Rubén has provided more than 7,000 immunizations to Montgomery County children during the pandemic.

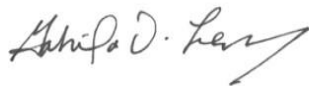
This initiative has three main objectives: (1) To improve vaccination rates among children and youth 0-21 years of age; (2) To provide developmentally appropriate primary care evaluations for children and youth who have missed their routine health care examinations; and (3) To address social determinants of health and linkages to care to youths 0-21 years of age. It is critical to the well-being of the community and to ensure that one's zip code not predetermine one's health outcomes – especially for these young people who have everything in front of them.

We know that mobile medical care has been shown to be cost effective and an effective way to reach under-served and disenfranchised communities that do not access mainstream healthcare. The Racial Equity Impact Assessment transmitted on January 26, 2022, by the County's Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice for the Immunization and Vaccines for Children Grant noted that since the collection of data on COVID vaccinations for children ages 5-11 began, consistently smaller shares of Black and Latino children - compared to their representation in the population – have received their first dose of the COVID vaccine...An equitable distribution would guarantee that all children are fully vaccinated and gain protection against COVID-19. The need is clearly still there. Moreover, as we slowly enter the post-pandemic phase of this cycle, we believe from our own efforts in serving these communities that these children are likely to need other vaccinations, as well as continued access to linguistically and culturally competent health access such as that provided by Casa Rubén. We believe that this type of mobile unit is critical to improve community well-being overall. Data being collected on COVID vaccinations continues to highlight certain zip codes and census tracts in the County where additional effort is still needed to bring vaccination rates to levels equivalent to other areas of the County.

Launched in 2020, Maryland Latinos Unidos (MLU) is a statewide association of Latinx nonprofits, community organizations, and business leaders housed within the nonprofit association Maryland Nonprofits. MLU was launched with two primary objectives. Most immediately, MLU is working to meet urgent needs in the Latinx community related to the COVID-19 pandemic and combat the disproportionate impact the pandemic has had on communities of color. Long term, MLU is working to build an equitable infrastructure to address the many disparities and barriers faced by Latinos in Maryland. Our focus is not only on community health, but also housing, education, employment, and environmental factors that impact Latinos' well-being by providing technical assistance through community-organizing, advocacy, and civic engagement.

We are excited to be a part of this project and thank you for the opportunity to collaborate.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gabriela D. Lemus". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Dr. Gabriela D. Lemus
Executive Director

**WE ARE
STRONGER
TOGETHER!**