

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

May 19, 2020

The Honorable Andrea Stewart-Cousins  
Majority Leader, New York State Senate  
New York State Capitol Building  
Albany, NY 12224

The Honorable Carl E. Heastie  
Speaker, New York State Assembly  
New York State Capitol Building  
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins and Speaker Heastie:

We would like to express our concern regarding the lack of the Hispanic community's representation on New York's newly-formed Independent Redistricting Commission and hope you will work to ensure the body's commissioners adequately reflect our state's diversity.

New York has the fourth largest Hispanic population in the nation.<sup>1</sup> Over 3.7 million New Yorkers are Latinx, representing the largest ethnic minority group in the state.<sup>2</sup> In New York City, Hispanics make up 29% of the city's population of over 8 million.<sup>3</sup> The substantial and increasing number of Hispanics in New York play a prominent role in local, statewide and national elections. While still underrepresented at every level of government in New York, Hispanics held 10 percent of both state legislative seats and congressional seats in 2018.<sup>4</sup> More than ever before, Latinx New Yorkers are shaping the political, economic and social fabric of the state, and it is critical that this population is spoken for on the Commission.

When Democrats became the majority party in the House of Representatives last year, sweeping democracy reforms rose to the top of legislative agenda, evidenced by the passage of the *For the People Act of 2019*, symbolically numbered H.R. 1 for its importance. Among the bill's reforms to campaign finance, government ethics, and voting rights is a provision requiring states to set up independent commissions to carry out congressional redistricting in a fair and non-partisan manner. The House also passed the *Voting Rights Advancement Act* to reinforce the continued importance of strong protection of the equal right to vote and to have one's vote counted. This action was especially important for New York, which has benefitted from close scrutiny under the preclearance provisions of the *Voting Rights Act of 1965*, which this new legislation would restore to full strength. While we commend New York's early establishment of an Independent Redistricting Commission, the lack of Hispanic representation among the currently appointed members defies a crucial tenant of these

---

<sup>1</sup> "Latinos in the 2016 Election: New York," Pew Research Center, January 19, 2020.

<https://www.pewresearch.org/hispanic/fact-sheet/latinos-in-the-2016-election-new-york/>

<sup>2</sup> "Demographic and Economic Profiles of Hispanics by State and County, 2014: New York," Pew Research Center.

<https://www.pewresearch.org/hispanic/states/state/ny>

<sup>3</sup> Melanie Grayce West and Mariana Alfaro, "NYC's Hispanic Population Is Growing," The Wall Street Journal, June 22, 2017. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/nycs-hispanic-population-is-growing-1498104060>

<sup>4</sup> Frank G. Runyeon, "The Lag in Latino Political Representation," City & State, October 31, 2018.

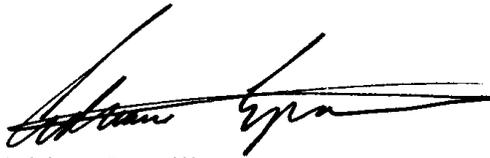
<https://www.cityandstateny.com/articles/politics/new-york-state/latino-political-representation-lag.html>

reforms, which instructs that membership is representative of the demographic groups that make up the state population.

We know New York prides itself in its diversity and aims to fairly delineate political representation amongst its entire population. For this reason, we urge you and members of the commission to include at least one Latinx member who can speak to the unique needs of the largest ethnic minority in New York.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

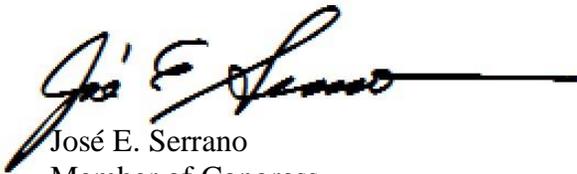
Sincerely,



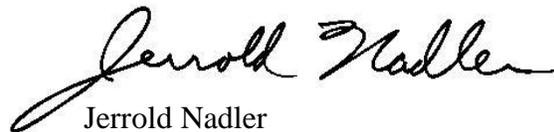
Adriano Espaillat  
Member of Congress



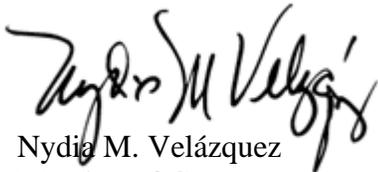
Max Rose  
Member of Congress



José E. Serrano  
Member of Congress



Jerrold Nadler  
Member of Congress



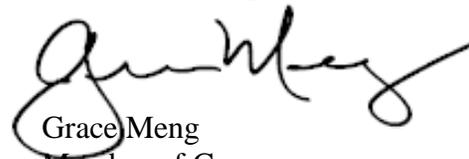
Nydia M. Velázquez  
Member of Congress



Thomas R. Suozzi  
Member of Congress



Eliot L. Engel  
Member of Congress



Grace Meng  
Member of Congress

Cc: Gov. Andrew Cuomo