**U.S. Department of Education**

**Office of Communications & Outreach, Press Office**

**400 Maryland Ave., S.W.**

**Washington, D.C. 20202**

**For Immediate Release**

August 5, 2015

**Contact**

Press Office, (202) 401-1576, [press@ed.gov](mailto:%20press@ed.gov)

**Houston’s Private, Public Sector Leaders Answer White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics’ “Commitments to Action” Call**

*$11 Million Commitment Impacts Over 350,000 students and 47,000 parents and educators in the Houston Area*

Leaders from Houston’s public and private sector today answered a [call to action](http://www.ed.gov/edblogs/hispanic-initiative/files/2015/03/FINAL_25-Anniversary-_Overview1.pdf) from the [White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics](http://www.ed.gov/edblogs/hispanic-initiative/) (Initiative) by announcing an investment of nearly $11 million to further support and advance the educational attainment of Hispanics from cradle-to-career. The announcement was made during the “Houston’s Commitment to Latinos in Education” reception held at the [Talento Bilingue de Houston](http://www.tbhcenter.org/).

“The commitments announced today by Houston’s public and private leaders will help us tackle the critical education challenges Hispanics face from cradle-to-career,” said Alejandra Ceja, the Initiative’s executive director. “Investing in our Latino students is not only the smart thing to do but it is also the right thing to do to strengthen our country’s economy and global competitiveness. In order to continue leveling the playing field for Latinos and ensure our nation’s vitality, we must continue to invest in their educational advancement.”

Commitments:

* The [National Hispanic Professional Organization](http://www.nhpo.us/) committed $4.2 million to encourage Hispanic students to pursue and complete a postsecondary education in the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields. Through the “Youth Leadership Institute,” efforts will also focus on engaging Hispanic parents to support their children’s educational experience.
* [Lone Star College](http://www.lonestar.edu/) committed $710,000 to help continue fostering the partnership between community-based organizations, educational institutions and parents by providing tools to help navigate through the K-20 education system.
* The [University of Houston, Downtown](https://www.uhd.edu/Pages/home.aspx) committed over $1.5 million focused on STEM education by preparing 200 bilingual aspiring educators to teach scientific investigation skills to minority elementary school children. Their commitment is to develop, recruit, and retain 40 quality STEM teachers for the next five years.
* The [University of Houston](http://www.uh.edu/) (UH) committed $950,000, focused on creating transfer pathways, providing resources and support to students as they seek a postsecondary education. The UH will partner with [Houston Community College](http://www.hccs.edu/) in developing a program aimed at supporting student academic success, readiness to transfer and smooth integration in the UH community.
* [Talento Bilingue de Houston](http://www.tbhcenter.org/) committed $1 million to support bilingual education and STEM education from preK-12 through the arts, including, academic theatre, cinema, music that will impact 300,000 students.
* [Tejano Center for Community Concerns-Raul Yzaguirre School for Success](http://www.tejanocenter.org/apps/pages/index.jsp?type=d&uREC_ID=286631&pREC_ID=657750) committed over $450,000 to target K-12 education with a focus on increasing high school graduation and college access. The commitment will aim to empower over 10,500 parents and 10,800 students through the “Parent and Student Alliance” (PASA) Initiative which will provide valuable resources, trainings and support.
* [NASA Johnson Space Center](http://www.nasa.gov/centers/johnson/home/) committed $200,000 to support over 2,000 Hispanic student and 1,650 parents and educator’s exposure to STEM-related content and activities through the excitement of the human space exploration story.
* [American Latino Center for Research, Education & Justice](http://www.alcrej.org/) committed $120,000 to provide eight education summits – four for educators, community leaders and advocates, and four – for students and parents. This commitment will promote collaboration, share best practices, and to help Latino students increase graduation rates and develop a stronger workforce.
* [Houston Hispanic Forum](http://hispanic-forum.org/) committed $1.2 million to expand its work focused on increasing access to and supporting over 10,000 Hispanic students’ college and career readiness. The commitment will also support over 10,000 parents, counselors and educators in their efforts to support Hispanic graduation rates through increased engagement and collaboration.
* [Youth Genesis Consulting, Inc.](http://www.youthgenesisconsulting.com/) committed $350,000 to support arts education and academic excellence. Through the “Art Evolution Afterschool Camp,” 4,100 students will build art skills, increase their involvement and attendance in school, build self-confidence and creativity, prevent violence in school and out and help students forge positive relationships with peers and adult role-models.

“As the Hispanic community continues to grow, educating our kids becomes ever more important. For this reason many individuals have dedicated their lives to education,” said Ben Mendez, founder, [National Hispanic Professional Organization](http://www.nhpo.us/) “Being part of the White House Initiative gave me an opportunity to work with some of these amazing individuals.  Their commitment to help others is commendable and I look forward to seeing their many accomplishments in the years to come as they fulfill their commitments to action.”

The Obama Administration is committed to investments to expand high-quality early learning programs; increase [equity and opportunity for all students](http://www.ed.gov/blog/2015/02/a-birds-eye-view-of-the-fiscal-year-2016-budget-request-for-education); support teachers and school leaders; and improve access, affordability and student [outcomes in college](http://www.ed.gov/blog/2015/02/the-2016-budget-improving-opportunity-and-affordability-in-higher-education). It is the Administration’s priority to ensure that every single child in this country deserves the opportunity to receive a strong education.

The Initiative was established in 1990 to address the educational disparities faced by the Hispanic community. In September 2015, the Initiative will celebrate its 25th anniversary, a historic milestone that will be commemorated with the leveraging of public- and private-sector commitments to action that invest in quality education programs and strategies for Hispanics.

*###*