

El Centro



SU CONEXIÓN A LA COMUNIDAD

Legislative Agenda 2022

At El Centro Inc. we believe all individuals deserve equal access opportunities to education, healthcare, and public services regardless of language, socioeconomic, or documentation status. El Centro remains committed to advocating for equitable policy changes that work to eliminate socioeconomic and health disparities amongst the most underserved communities, particularly the Latino community. The agency plays a critical role in promoting key policy issues that advance the interests of the Latino community. These are to be promoted through the facilitation of direct services, community education and direct action. In advocacy, the agency will take a multifaceted, proactive, and at times reactive, approach to furthering community interests and deterring harmful policy developments. These efforts will be supported by the agency's strongest assets, its grassroots client base, allies, issue expertise and reputation. El Centro Inc will work with the community to lay the groundwork through educational, economic, and social opportunities which over time, can substantially strengthen the agency's programmatic work and fulfill community interests and needs.

I. Legislative Priority: Build safer communities and create equal access to photo identification through the passage of the Safe and Welcoming ordinance in Wyandotte County.

Residents in Wyandotte County who lack photo identification face barriers to accessing basic services and functions. The Safe and Welcoming ordinance in Wyandotte takes a two-prong approach to creating safer communities, ensuring equal access, and strengthening community bonds by facilitating access to photo identifications and protecting community members who lack an immigration status. The municipal photo identification card program would be accessible to the most vulnerable community members such as foster youth, seniors, undocumented immigrants, homeless individuals, and others who face barriers to accessing traditional government issued identifications. The approval of this ordinance would facilitate access to services and commercial entities like banks, libraries, school enrollment and more. The ICE noncompliance resolution would limit cooperation between municipal law enforcement and immigration enforcement authorities, thus making the ID program safe for undocumented community members. The Safe and Welcoming committee will continue to work with the United Government of Wyandotte County to achieve the approval and recognition of this ordinance. Establishing this ordinance will strengthen the fabric of Wyandotte County by ensuring equal access to services and functions and creating a safer community.

II. Legislative Priority: “Axe the Food Tax,” The elimination of state sales tax on food, food ingredients and other farm products sold at farmers markets and discontinuing the nonrefundable food sales tax credit through the passage of House Bill No. 2487 as introduced benefits every Kansan.

Studies conducted by Feeding America revealed that one in eight Kansans and one in six Kansan kids suffer from hunger. The pandemic exacerbated food insecurity amongst the most vulnerable communities. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020 Consumer Expenditure Survey, the lowest earning workers spent over twenty percent of their income on groceries, while the highest earning twenty percent of workers spend just over four percent of their income on groceries. Kansas has the second highest food sales tax in the nation. Eliminating sales tax on food would benefit every Kansan but especially those living on low wages or in food deserts where grocery prices tend to be considerably higher due to scarcity. It is estimated that 30 percent of Kansas counties may be defined as food deserts. El Centro stands behind Governor Kelly’s proposition to pass a clean bill, Axe the Tax, for eliminating sales tax on food in Kansas. Eliminating sales tax on food in Kansas is a step in the right direction for redressing food insecurity amongst the most vulnerable communities.

III. Legislative Priority: Work diligently in collaboration with Kansas Action for Children to support House Bill No. 2525 relating to decreasing barriers to food and childcare assistance.

Kansas families are burdened with unaffordable childcare. Single parent households and low-income families are disproportionately affected by the lack of affordable childcare. Additionally, many parents are unable to overcome the barriers set by childcare assistance programs such as, cooperating with Child Support program. Increasing childcare assistance programs contribute to stable households. El Centro Inc will collaborate with Kansas Action for Children in supporting this bill to expand childcare and food assistance. We will work to collect testimonies in support of this effort and submit them to the Senate Committee. Child support cooperation is hurting people and puts domestic violence survivors at risk. Facilitating access to high quality childcare encourages parents to return to school, it prepares children and stimulates the economy

IV. Legislative Priority: Medicaid Expansion in Kansas

For nearly a decade, Medicaid expansion has been actively blocked by Kansas leadership, despite widespread public support. Kansas is only one in twelve states that has yet to expand Medicaid. The need for coverage has been exacerbated by the pandemic, especially for those who fall into the coverage gap. El Centro Inc. commits to actively supporting traditional legislative routes for Medicaid Expansion, as well as the newly proposed constitutional amendments, which would give Kansas voters a say by putting Medicaid expansion up to a public vote during the 2023 general elections. El Centro will use its advocacy and engagement tools and assets to mobilize the community in appealing to legislatures to vote in favor of Medicaid expansion.

V. Legislative Priority: Comprehensive Immigration Reform with a path to citizenship for the over eleven million undocumented individuals who are essential to the social and economic fabric of the U.S.

Historically, Latino's have been courted by politicians with the false promises of immigration reform, only to be treated as economic commodities and political pawns in the end. The agency commends the passage of a comprehensive immigration reform, including a path to citizenship for the over eleven million undocumented immigrants living in the United States as well as those with limited status, such as DACA recipients. The agency will take direct action to support comprehensive reform that ensures permanence, equity, and justice for undocumented individuals in the U.S today.

VI. Other important Issues

El Centro's top priority is the wellbeing and success of the Latino community, while the agency does not have the capacity to take direct action on all legislative matters that affect the community, it will continue to promote the success of progressive policies and deter the prospects of negative ones. Other imperative policies that El Centro Inc supports include but are not limited to:

- I. El Centro Inc. supports criminal justice reform that works to eliminate socioeconomic and racial disparities at all levels of the justice system, including the elimination of a monetized industrial prison complex and mass incarceration which disproportionately targets Latino and Black individuals.
- II. El Centro Inc. opposes any legislation that censors or politicizes American history and takes local control from school boards and the State Board of Education and supports the teaching of Critical Race Theory in schools.
- III. El Centro Inc. supports the expansion of affordable housing programs to address the rise in housing insecurity and homelessness aggravated by the pandemic and inflation.
- IV. El Centro Inc. supports the transparent, equitable and non-gerrymandered process of redrawing of congressional district lines that does not dilute the voting power of people of color and communities of interest in our congressional districts.
- V. Promoting livable wages, as we know BIPOC and women are most likely to be disproportionately affected by the low income wage of \$7.25 in Kansas and the poverty that effects our communities.