



# health, wealth & dignity agenda

REBUILDING CALIFORNIA'S  
OPPORTUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

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# Acknowledgements

The 2026 Health, Wealth & Dignity Agenda was developed through a collaborative, non-partisan cross-sector process led by the **Ad Hoc Latino Leaders Group**—a diverse coalition of leaders spanning policy, philanthropy, civil rights, civil liberties, health, and community-based organizations.

Policy development was anchored by trusted community-based organizations that led structured working groups within each pillar. Through a series of facilitated discussions, these groups engaged Ad Hoc members in an iterative process that moved from expansive vision-setting to the refinement of bold, actionable proposals. This approach created space for rigorous dialogue, innovation, and the surfacing of solutions that respond to the complexity of communities' needs.

The final Agenda reflects the depth of this engagement—integrating ideas shaped across sectors into a cohesive, forward-looking framework. It advances not only specific policy recommendations, but a big-picture vision for California that is ambitious, equity-driven, and grounded in the goal of moving communities from surviving to thriving.

Design by Hispanic Federation

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# Preface

California stands at a defining moment. As the state confronts rising costs, housing instability, climate-driven disasters, rapid technological change, and growing concerns about public safety and trust, a central question emerges: will California’s economic growth translate into stability and opportunity for all or continue to produce uneven outcomes that leave too many residents behind?

Latino and immigrant communities are central to California’s present and future. Latinos became the state’s largest population group in 2014<sup>1</sup> and are projected to constitute approximately 40% of the population through 2070.<sup>2</sup> Due to their significantly younger demographic, with a median age of 30 compared to 42 for non-Latinos, Latino communities will play a crucial role in shaping California’s schools, workforce, and public systems, particularly within school-age and early-career populations.<sup>3</sup> Latinos represent more than half of K–12 students and 29% of Latinos in California are minors (0–17 years of age).<sup>4</sup> Latinos now make up 39% of California’s workforce, totaling approximately 7.8 million workers in essential sectors such as agriculture and construction, and their workforce has grown by 77% from 4.4 million in 2000 to 7.8 million in 2023—outpacing the 7% growth of non-Latino workers—highlighting their critical role in both the state’s economy and the nationwide labor force expansion.<sup>5</sup> Latino economic output in California exceeds \$1 trillion annually,<sup>6</sup> and Latino and immigrant workers sustain the state’s core industries, including agriculture, construction, logistics, healthcare, hospitality, and small business development.

Despite this central role, access to rights, protections, and opportunity remains uneven and structurally constrained. Latino workers are overrepresented in low-wage, physically demanding, and essential jobs,<sup>7</sup> often without access to employer-sponsored healthcare, retirement benefits, or paid leave.<sup>8</sup> In California, 69% of Latino private-sector workers lack access to a workplace retirement plan.<sup>9</sup> Many families face housing instability and are disproportionately represented among those experiencing or at risk of homelessness.<sup>10</sup> Latino workers, particularly Latinas, face significant pay disparities, with California’s gender wage gaps among the largest in the country for Latinas resulting in substantial lifetime earnings losses—impacting their economic stability and limiting family spending on essentials like housing, childcare, and healthcare.<sup>11</sup> Across the state, environmental harms—including air pollution, extreme heat, wildfires, and floods—disproportionately impact Latino, Indigenous, and low-income communities, reflecting deep racial and regional inequities from San Diego to Sonoma. Across systems, access to services and protections remains too often contingent on socio-economic status, immigration status, prior contact with the criminal legal system, language barriers, or geography. These disparities are compounded by gaps in representation, access, and institutional trust as the state’s Latino communities remain underrepresented across the judiciary, media, philanthropy, and corporate leadership.<sup>12</sup> All the while, nonprofit, cultural, and community-based organizations that function as essential public infrastructure, preserve community history, and sustain civic life continue to face chronic financial instability and challenges from today’s federal government and extremists. As a result, too many Californians continue to experience public systems as fragmented, inaccessible, or misaligned with the realities of their lives.

The Ad Hoc Latino Leaders Group was formed to ensure that Latino voices shape the policies, investments, and institutions that define California’s future. Rooted in a legacy of cross-sector leadership—from civil rights and labor to philanthropy, policy, and community-based organizations—the group has convened at critical moments to advance a shared vision for equity and inclusion. Today, Latinos, as the state’s plurality population have the responsibility to lead with clarity and purpose to improve the lives of all Californians.



The 2026 gubernatorial election presents a rare and consequential inflection point. It marks a transition in statewide leadership, the final budget cycle of the current administration, and a period of deep federal uncertainty that will shape how states respond to economic instability, technological change, and attacks on civil rights and civil liberties. At the same time, California faces persistent inequality—rising costs of living, uneven access to opportunity, and widening gaps in wealth and power. Too often, the state’s prosperity has been built on the labor of working families without delivering shared stability or mobility in return. This moment demands more than incremental change; it calls for a bold, coordinated agenda that centers the communities most critical to California’s future.

The Health, Wealth, and Dignity Agenda is that response. It is a governing framework designed to move California toward a modern-day “Third Reconstruction”—one that expands rights, rebuilds economic opportunity, and reimagines public systems so that all people can thrive. This Agenda rejects a status quo in which families are asked to survive while systems concentrate wealth and power among a few. Instead, it advances a vision of California where health is a right, economic security is a foundation for mobility and ownership, and dignity is embedded in law, policy, and everyday life. By aligning policy, narrative, and civic action, the Ad Hoc Latino Leaders Group offers a roadmap for the next Governor—and for the state—to build a more just, inclusive, and prosperous California for all.





## CHAPTER 1

# *HEALTH: Health is a Human Right*

## HEALTH: Health is a Human Right

California's Latino and Indigenous communities reflect profound diversity and complexity—spanning multi-generational and mixed-status families navigating fragmented access shaped by immigration policy—including Indigenous populations facing linguistic barriers to care, seniors (including undocumented elders) struggling to access specialists, medications, and technology, and Latino LGBTQ+ individuals confronting intersecting discrimination and culturally incongruent health systems that limit equitable access to care.

Given the critical role of Latinos in the state's economy both as consumers and producers of services and goods, improving health outcomes for these diverse communities will benefit all Californians. The disruptions created by the current federal administration present a unique opportunity to reorient and recalibrate our healthcare systems to improve access to care and ensure sustainability. California must invest in public health and care delivery models that center equity across the state, ensure data privacy, and deliver cultural competency.

California has historically been a leader in advancing health policy proposals to improve health access and outcomes. We must move forward with the goal of covering all Californians and centering health as a human right. Achieving this requires a recommitment to universal access to healthcare rooted in whole-person and community-centered primary care.

California must recognize the fundamental social determinants of health (SDoH) shaping nearly every aspect of life for all Californians, with an unacceptable distribution of harms placed squarely on the well-being of youthful, growing communities of color. An estimated 3.3 million individuals (8.25% of the state's population) live in mixed-status households with someone who is undocumented.<sup>13</sup> More than half (52%) of the state's children identify as Latino, and over half (54%) have at least one immigrant parent who was born outside of the U.S.<sup>14</sup> Immigration status affects access to coverage, economic stability, mental health, family unity, and trust in public systems. Healthcare policies that don't center this reality will continue to produce fragmented care and inequitable outcomes. A forward-looking health policy agenda must include an immigration-informed lens across healthcare delivery, coverage expansion, and community engagement, ensuring that all Californians, regardless of status, can access the care and services necessary to thrive and begin to rebuild trust between residents and our systems of government and care.

Currently, a significant number of Latinos in California rely on the social safety net such as Medi-Cal, Cal-Fresh, and other family support benefits.<sup>15</sup> Still, even before the disruptions and limitations enacted by the federal government, access to those benefits has been limited by misinformation and mistrust of government, inequities across counties, and lingering stigma or fear of benefit usage. Persistent coverage gaps, barriers to linguistically and culturally responsive care, and deep fractures in trust between Latino communities and public institutions threaten the effectiveness of California's healthcare infrastructure. Rebuilding trust in our health and safety systems, while ensuring equitable access to culturally concordant care for everyone who needs it is essential to sustaining California's public health system and economic strength as the fourth-largest economy in the world.

This also imagines a re-investment in our healthcare infrastructure, including workforce, hospitals, clinics, doctor's offices, mobile health, and telehealth. Health systems must meet people where they are—linguistically, culturally, and geographically—while closing the coverage and trust gaps that continue to leave many families behind. Investments in our Latino healthcare workforce are already being made but must continue to grow and be followed by transparency and accountability about the success of investments and the progress towards building out the human capital in our



**CALIFORNIA HAS HISTORICALLY BEEN A LEADER IN ADVANCING HEALTH POLICY PROPOSALS TO IMPROVE HEALTH ACCESS AND OUTCOMES. WE MUST MOVE FORWARD WITH THE GOAL OF COVERING ALL CALIFORNIANS AND CENTERING HEALTH AS A HUMAN RIGHT.**

future Latino workforce. This work starts in the education pipeline, but state support is needed from education and training through practice and service delivery.

The policies outlined below represent a bold and expansive Latino health agenda to proactively address long-standing health inequities and lead to improved health outcomes for all Californians. With its scale, innovation, and economic power, California can lead the nation in building a healthcare model that boldly protects and expands access while improving outcomes for all communities.

## 1. Access and Sustainability

### OVERVIEW

Healthcare is a human right and access to healthcare is foundational to both population health and economic stability. Research and data consistently show that individuals who can access reliable healthcare are more likely to receive preventive care, manage chronic conditions, and maintain consistent participation in the workforce. Gaps in access—driven by cost, eligibility barriers, or system fragmentation—lead to delayed care, higher long-term costs, and reduced productivity.<sup>16</sup>

The sustainability of our healthcare system is also critically important. Evidence from health systems research shows that unstable financing and fragmented delivery models weaken system performance, reduce provider participation, and exacerbate inequities over time.<sup>17</sup> Without protections and long-term funding strategies, California risks reversing coverage gains, which we are already experiencing.

For California, the challenge is not only expanding access but ensuring that access is continuous, affordable, and resilient. Healthcare must be treated as core infrastructure. Strengthening access and financing structures will be essential to ensuring that California's healthcare system can meet the needs of its diverse and growing population over the long term.

### PROPOSAL 1 – Constitutional Right to Healthcare for All Californians

California must establish healthcare as a state constitutional right to provide long-term stability, ensuring that access to care is protected as a foundational component of the state's social and economic infrastructure.

- ▶ Seek a state constitutional amendment to ensure universal access to healthcare, regardless of immigration status. Codification will protect access for all populations.

### PROPOSAL 2 – New State Revenue Stream to Sustain Right to Healthcare

California's current reliance on fluctuating state budget allocations and federal funding streams to support our growing healthcare system creates instability, particularly during economic downturns. Systems are further hurt when federal dollars limit who our state systems can or cannot provide reimbursed care for, further exacerbating inequities in our systems of care.

- ▶ Create a new guaranteed minimum annual funding stream that would fund investments in our public health infrastructure, including public health, safety net, workforce, and care delivery across counties. This would create a guaranteed healthcare funding "floor," like the development of Proposition 98 (for education), in order to better sustain our healthcare needs.

### PROPOSAL 3 – Strengthen Medi-Cal as a Foundation for Equitable Care

California should modernize and strengthen the Medi-Cal system to deliver high-quality, whole-person, community-centered primary care across every region of California—from enrollment through ongoing care—by closing gaps in continuity, expanding provider participation, and improving system coordination so that Medi-Cal functions as a reliable pathway to health and long-term stability.

- ▶ Support mechanisms and policy changes that help individuals move more easily through the enrollment and redetermination process. This promotes continuity of access to care and reduces unnecessary administrative burdens that often lead to disruptions in care.
- ▶ Strengthen system coordination across varying health fields (physical, mental, behavioral, dental, etc.) to ensure Californians receive timely, coordinated care.
- ▶ Pair system improvements with increased reimbursement rates for providers to encourage growth throughout the state’s physician network and improve overall population health.



## II. Reimagining Care: Integrated, Trusted, and Culturally Responsive Systems

### OVERVIEW

Care delivery in the U.S. remains highly fragmented. Patients often navigate disconnected systems across physical health, behavioral health, and social services, leading to gaps in treatment, delayed care, and poorer outcomes. For Latino, Indigenous, and immigrant communities, barriers such as language access, limited culturally concordant providers, and fear around data sharing continue to hinder meaningful engagement with care.

Robust investment in primary care is one of the most effective strategies to improve population health—consistently linked to lower mortality rates, longer life expectancy, better chronic disease outcomes, and overall healthier communities across diverse settings and time periods.<sup>18</sup> High-quality primary care means having a trusted team of health providers who treat the whole person, make care easy to access, and stay connected to their patients over time—helping meet most of their health needs while supporting them, their family, and their community.

California must move beyond fragmented care delivery toward a unified system that integrates physical health, behavioral health, and social services—designed with trust, cultural competency, and privacy at its core. A forward-looking approach requires aligning workforce development, care models, and technology systems with the lived realities of diverse communities—ensuring care is not only accessible but trusted, coordinated, and effective.

### PROPOSAL 1 – Statewide Whole-Person, Community-Centered Primary Care Model

California can set a new statewide standard—one that improves outcomes, rebuilds trust in health systems, and advances equitable care delivery. The state should establish a unified, statewide standard for whole-person, community-centered primary care that ensures every resident—regardless of zip code—can access integrated, high-quality care. Today’s fragmented system too often separates physical health, behavioral health, and social services, leading to gaps in care, poorer outcomes, and higher long-term costs.<sup>19</sup>

**ROBUST INVESTMENT IN PRIMARY CARE IS ONE OF THE MOST EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE POPULATION HEALTH. CALIFORNIA CAN SET A NEW STATEWIDE STANDARD THAT IMPROVES HEALTH OUTCOMES, REBUILDS TRUST, AND ADVANCES EQUITABLE CARE DELIVERY.**

By building on California’s existing network of community clinics and Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), the state can scale a proven infrastructure to deliver comprehensive care that integrates behavioral, mental, vision, and dental services while addressing the social determinants of health that shape well-being. This coordinated, community-based model rooted in prevention and continuity of care would strengthen both population health and the state’s overall economic stability.

- ▶ Design and adopt a whole-person, community-centered primary care model as a unified, statewide standard of care across all 58 counties to move the state toward a more equitable healthcare system.
- ▶ Build the new system on California’s existing community clinic and Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC) system to incorporate behavioral, mental, vision and dental, alongside core programs that control for the social determinants of health (SDoH) that impact patient well-being.
- ▶ Transform and scale statewide training systems to prepare providers to deliver culturally responsive, whole-person care that meets the full spectrum of California’s diversity—including seniors, LGBTQ+ individuals, people with disabilities, veterans, and those experiencing homelessness—setting a new standard for equity-driven care delivery.

## **PROPOSAL 2 – Build the Nation’s Leading Inclusive Healthcare Workforce**

California should address severe and persistent Latino physician shortage by investing in a comprehensive, end-to-end workforce pipeline that expands access to medical education, training, and career advancement for Latino communities—particularly in medically and linguistically underserved regions. Despite Latinos comprising nearly 40% of the state’s population, they account for only about 6% of physicians, and current trends suggest it could take centuries to close this gap without intervention.<sup>20</sup> While Latino enrollment at four-year institutions has continued to rise in California and across the nation, these students are not matriculating into medical school, residency training, or the physician workforce at comparable rates.<sup>21</sup>

Strengthening California’s health workforce pipeline is essential not only to increase the number of Latino physicians, nurses, and health professionals but to improve language access, cultural concordance, and health outcomes. Empirical analysis has shown that a diverse workforce enhances quality of care and expands access in medically underserved communities.<sup>22</sup>

- ▶ Expand medical training programming and credentialing into education systems beyond private institutions and the University of California to ensure programs are meeting individuals in the systems they are already a part of, such as the California State University and California Community College systems.
- ▶ Invest in faculty for medical training programs, medical school, teaching health centers, and residency (including nursing and physician assistant programs) to ensure students have the support they need to complete programs.
- ▶ Expand regional opportunities for career training to support a “train and stay in community” model to ensure growth across all regions in California, especially medically underserved communities such as the Central Valley, Inland California, and the Imperial Valley.
- ▶ Strengthen state collaboration between and among California Department of Health Care Access and Information, Cradle to Career, California Department of Education, and other major efforts to track education and workforce to ensure transparency and accountability regarding outcomes and success of investment in the Latino healthcare workforce.

### PROPOSAL 3 – Elevate Community Health Workers as Core Infrastructure for California’s Health System

California should formally integrate community health workers, promotoras, and community health representatives (CHW/P/Rs)<sup>23</sup> into state agencies and safety net systems as a permanent, well-compensated workforce—recognizing them as essential to delivering equitable, community-centered care. These trusted leaders bridge longstanding gaps between healthcare systems and underserved communities by providing culturally and linguistically grounded support, improving navigation of complex systems, and strengthening trust where it has historically been fractured.

A growing body of evidence shows that CHW-led models improve chronic disease management, increase preventive care use, and reduce avoidable hospitalizations—particularly in communities facing barriers related to language, access, and fear of institutional systems.<sup>24</sup> By professionalizing and scaling this workforce with sustainable funding and fair wages, California can build a more effective, prevention-oriented health system that improves outcomes while reducing long-term costs.

- ▶ Establish a statewide CHW/P/R workforce standard within Medi-Cal. Create a permanent, reimbursable CHW/P/R benefit that funds full-time positions with living wages, standardized training, and certification pathways—while expanding services to include care navigation, eligibility support, and community-based prevention, particularly in underserved regions.
- ▶ Invest in training, data transparency, and continuous improvement. Fund ongoing professional development aligned with emerging needs (e.g., Medi-Cal eligibility changes, digital health navigation), and require statewide data collection and public reporting on CHW/P/R utilization, outcomes, and impact to strengthen accountability, scale best practices, and inform future investments.

### PROPOSAL 4 – Build an Inclusive, Secure Digital Health System for California’s Future

California must lead the nation in building a modern, inclusive digital health infrastructure that improves care delivery, expands access, and drives better health outcomes—particularly for Latino and underserved communities. Strategic investments in health technology, including telehealth, data systems, and artificial intelligence, can increase efficiency, reduce long-term costs, and strengthen preventive care. Evidence shows that digital health tools, when equitably deployed, improve care access, quality of life, and chronic disease management while lowering avoidable hospital utilization.<sup>25</sup>

Modernizing California’s healthcare technology infrastructure is critical. California policymakers must ensure that Latino medical patients have the resources and support needed to close the digital divide, as this population is less likely to utilize telehealth and often faces high rates of preventable chronic diseases, alongside limited internet access and digital literacy.<sup>26</sup> Bridging this gap will enhance access to care, improve health outcomes, and promote equity in California’s increasingly digital health landscape. Investments are necessary to build out an efficient, reliable digital health ecosystem that captures quality medical information by gender, race/ethnicity, age, geography, and other key population demographic categories so that technological advances improve access, support patient care, and ensure privacy for all Californians.

- ▶ Prioritize the inclusion of Latino and similarly situated communities in the development, training, and application of new technologies such as artificial intelligence to enhance health outcomes and improve access to safety-net services. This should involve targeted investments in community-level training programs for technology usage and navigation, along with funding for the development of products specifically tailored to meet the needs of medically underserved populations.

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**CALIFORNIA SHOULD FORMALLY INTEGRATE COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS, PROMOTORAS, AND COMMUNITY HEALTH REPRESENTATIVES INTO STATE AGENCIES AND SAFETY NET SYSTEMS AS A PERMANENT, WELL-COMPENSATED WORKFORCE.**

- ▶ Ensure that security and data integrity are prioritized in the expansion of digital health tools, safeguarding against the potential weaponization of data against Latino communities, particularly in the context of immigration enforcement and digital redlining.
- ▶ Bridge the digital divide in California to ensure accessible telehealth services for all, thereby reducing barriers to care and promoting equitable access across all 58 counties.

### *III. Cultivating a Healthy Ecosystem: Transforming Social Determinants of Health for a Brighter Future*

#### OVERVIEW

California is on the brink of a transformative opportunity to redefine health outcomes through a comprehensive approach to social determinants of health (SDoH). Fundamental factors like housing stability, income, education, food access, and environmental conditions—such as clean water and reduced exposure to pollutants—shape the wellness of our communities. When basic needs are unmet, the long-term consequences can lead to severe health disparities, particularly among vulnerable populations.

Addressing SDoH is not merely a policy choice; it is a vital strategy for enhancing population health and reducing healthcare costs over the long term. By intentionally aligning public health, economic development, housing, environmental policy, and community investment, California can create resilient communities where everyone thrives. This ambitious vision recognizes that the environment and access to essential resources are critical in shaping health outcomes.

Investing in SDoH empowers communities, strengthens prevention measures, and significantly advances public health. A healthier population translates into a more productive workforce and a robust economy for California, positioning the state as a national leader in health equity and community well-being. Together, we can elevate our collective health and ensure that all Californians can live their healthiest lives.

#### **PROPOSAL 1 – Food Access as Necessary Groundwork for Health Equity and Community Resilience**

Reliable access to nutritious food is a fundamental driver of health outcomes, particularly for children and seniors, and should be recognized as a core component of public health infrastructure. Food insecurity not only undermines physical health but also affects students' ability to succeed in school, strains mental health, and creates persistent stress for individuals and families.

- ▶ Enhance food security and equitable access to nutritious foods by fortifying local food systems, particularly in California's regions with the highest child poverty rates. This initiative should focus on increasing the availability of locally grown foods and improving public transportation options to better connect underserved communities with grocery stores, farmers' markets, and food banks.
- ▶ Increase and expand the California Food Assistance Program to provide essential food benefits to residents who cannot access CalFresh. This proposal includes a significant investment in outreach efforts to ensure that individuals are informed about available nutrition programs and resources, promoting food security across all communities.



- ▶ Strengthen the service reach and quality of food banks and food pantries, designating them as “safe spaces” where immigration enforcement actions cannot occur. Enact and support policies that ensure these vital resources remain accessible without fear, fostering a community environment where all individuals can seek assistance with dignity and security.

## **PROPOSAL 2 – Improving Environmental Health Across California’s Urban, Rural, and Suburban Regions**

Latino communities in California bear a disproportionate burden of environmental injustices, facing compounded challenges from rising temperatures, severe air pollution, and significant health disparities. Compared to non-Latino white neighborhoods, these communities experience 1.6 times more extreme heat days and are exposed to 2.7 times more diesel particulate matter, leading to higher rates of asthma and heart disease.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, with 76% of Latino neighborhoods classified as Disadvantaged Communities, it is crucial to implement policies that address these inequities and improve environmental health outcomes for these vulnerable populations.<sup>28</sup>

In the face of escalating emergencies including climate disasters, Latino residents face unique vulnerabilities— increased exposure to air pollution, compounding of preexisting health conditions, and economic shocks due to occupational segregation in industries impacted by climate disasters—which collectively exacerbate health and recovery.<sup>29</sup> Amid recent wildfires in Los Angeles County, Latinos are often overlooked in favor of more affluent communities, even as they encounter systemic barriers to insurance, emergency preparedness, and recovery.

In the face of aging infrastructure, rising environmental threats, and worsening health disparities, California has a critical opportunity to lead the nation in environmental justice through bold action that enhances community health, lowers healthcare costs, builds resilience, and fosters economic recovery in the face of adversity.

- ▶ Enhance air and water quality by investing in local community monitoring networks and holding polluters accountable through stricter enforcement and penalties, ensuring that industries cover cleanup costs rather than burdening impacted communities.
- ▶ Mitigate extreme heat by establishing maximum indoor temperature standards and adapting living and working environments, particularly in heat-prone areas, to protect public health.
- ▶ Upgrade California’s aging water infrastructure to provide quality, affordable, and accessible drinking water, reducing reliance on bottled water in underserved communities—especially unincorporated communities, rural regions, and agricultural communities.
- ▶ Guarantee that medically and linguistically underserved households have equal access to emergency relief, displacement prevention, and recovery resources by ensuring adequate funding and implementation, while also prioritizing worker health through sustainable transitions in industries key to California’s future.
- ▶ Expand community and public ownership of clean energy and climate-resilient infrastructure for climate-impacted communities, while mandating equitable access to affordable, comprehensive homeowner, rental, and business insurance for low- and moderate-income households.

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**POWER COMMUNITIES  
TO OWN THEIR CLIMATE  
FUTURE**

**EXPAND COMMUNITY  
AND PUBLIC OWNERSHIP  
OF CLEAN ENERGY AND  
CLIMATE-RESILIENT  
INFRASTRUCTURE.**

### PROPOSAL 3 – Civic Engagement Shapes Community Health

Recognizing “civic health” as a vital component of California’s healthcare ecosystem and a critical social determinant of health, we must promote active community engagement to improve health outcomes and strengthen democracy.

Research indicates that robust civic infrastructure significantly influences community engagement, with higher levels of participation—such as voting and volunteering—correlating to improved public health outcomes and overall well-being.<sup>30</sup> Healthier counties tend to boast better-resourced civic infrastructure, including access to broadband internet, libraries, and civic spaces, resulting in higher voter turnout and census participation.<sup>31</sup>

Facilitating civic health necessitates sufficient resources to initiate, enhance, and sustain cross-jurisdictional and cross-sectoral partnerships that increase Californian’s ability to fully engage in civic life. By investing in civil society-governmental collaboration and infrastructure, health metrics and civic engagement levels can—and should—improve, contributing to healthier, more resilient communities.

- ▶ Rebuild and sustain trust between Latino communities and public systems by implementing community-led outreach initiatives, leveraging trusted messenger networks, promotoras, and community health workers to enhance participation in health data collection, Census engagement, land use decisions, and important governance processes.
- ▶ Develop deep navigational resources so that community members, advocates, and local leaders can effectively access institutions, secure necessary resources, and hold systems accountable to enhance community health.
- ▶ Supply providers, bureaucrats, community health workers, educators, and civil society leaders with foundational education in public health, health equity, and health policy, enabling them to meaningfully shape policy development, advocate for community priorities, and bridge the gap between lived experiences and legislative action.
- ▶ Allocate sufficient funding to local nonprofits and community organizations in medically and linguistically underserved communities to develop programs, deliver in-culture services, and build community hubs to create responsive and inclusive environments that empower residents, foster belonging, promote lifelong learning, and enhance civic health.

### PROPOSAL 4 – Targeted Interventions for Equitable Health Communication in a Complex Information Environment

Trust is a critical component in delivering quality care across public health systems, yet many diverse subgroups in California have growing doubts about accessibility and reliability. Compounding the erosion of trust in public health, a “malignant neglect,” characterized by low public awareness, normalization of health decline, political inaction, and a narrow focus on individual health behaviors, are contributing to health inequities, especially for vulnerable demographic groups.<sup>32</sup> The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated existing information disparities, creating a pressing need for interventions that resonate with these populations.<sup>33</sup> The rampant spread of health misinformation poses one of the greatest challenges to public health and social welfare, where deliberate efforts to undermine established scientific findings, highlights the urgent need for comprehensive strategies that not only address the sources of misinformation but also promote a healthier communication ecosystem by holding information producers and platforms accountable.

To ensure that health information reaches underserved populations accurately and in real-time, California should adopt targeted interventions that are designed to overcome today’s fragmented information ecosystem to communicate accurate, real-time information to medically

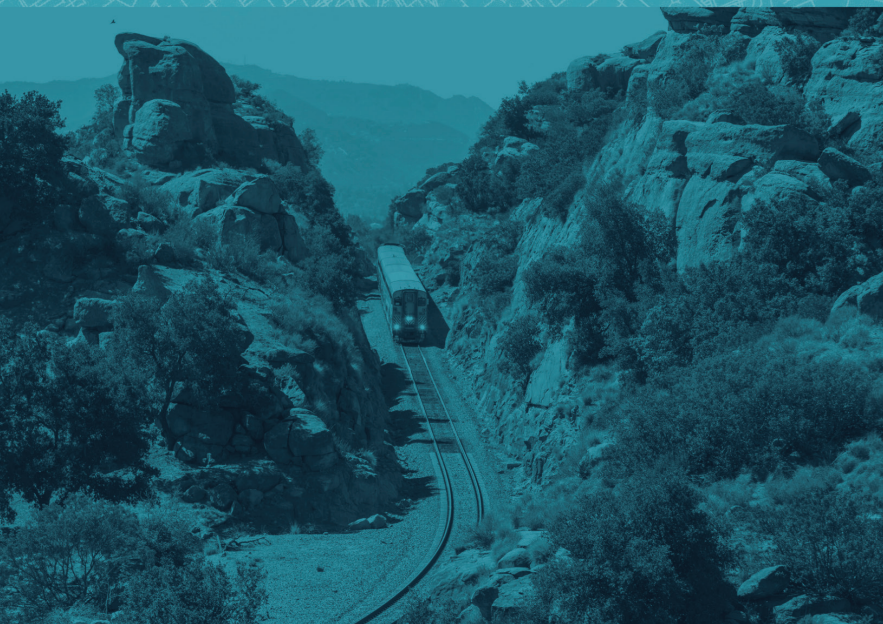
**MAKE TRUSTED  
INFORMATION A PUBLIC  
GOOD**

**IN A FRAGMENTED  
INFORMATION  
ECOSYSTEM, ACCESS  
TO CLEAR, CULTURALLY  
RELEVANT INFORMATION  
MUST BE TREATED  
AS A PUBLIC RIGHT—  
REQUIRING CALIFORNIA  
TO INVEST IN ENSURING  
ALL RESIDENTS CAN  
ACCESS THE RESOURCES  
AND SERVICES THEY  
NEED TO THRIVE.**

and linguistically underserved residents. Traditional government sources often fall short in being culturally relevant, making trusted messengers, including community-based organizations (CBO's), vital for effective communication.<sup>34</sup> By fostering environments that reach people where they are and deliver tangible results, California can cultivate trust and influence to distribute critical information to residents. This collaborative approach will not only raise awareness around critical health issues and emergencies but also contribute to improved health outcomes for California's diverse and dynamic populations, promoting equity and well-being across the state.

- ▶ Promote in-language and culturally tailored messaging campaigns that respect the Californians' diverse traditions and values across state agencies and 58 counties' health systems.
- ▶ Leverage CBOs as trusted messengers through information grants to counteract the erosion of confidence and combat health disparities. These local organizations, composed of relatable and respected community members, can effectively engage families, fostering trust through cultural sensitivity and shared experiences to improve well-being.
- ▶ Leverage Ethnic Media and Nonprofit News Partnerships. Establish state-funded partnerships with ethnic media outlets and local nonprofit news organizations to effectively disseminate critical information to hard-to-reach households.





**CHAPTER 2**  
***WEALTH: Rebuilding California's  
Opportunity Infrastructure***

## WEALTH: Rebuilding California's Opportunity Infrastructure

California's Latino families are the backbone of the state. They make up nearly 40% of California's population and contribute more than \$1 trillion in economic activity annually, making the Latino economy one of the fastest-growing drivers of the state's overall prosperity.<sup>35</sup> Latinos build California's homes, power small businesses, care for children and elders, and sustain the industries that keep the state's economy moving. As California continues to grow and change, Latino workers and families are not only central to the state's present—they will determine its economic future. Yet many Latino households face a constant economic squeeze.

For millions of working families, the challenge is not building wealth in the future—it is paying the bills today. Rent continues to rise faster than wages. Childcare costs rival college tuition. Groceries, transportation, and healthcare costs stretch already tight budgets. Many families work two or three jobs yet remain one emergency away from financial crisis.

Latinas, in particular, often carry the economic weight of their families—balancing work, caregiving, and community responsibilities while trying to create stability for the next generation. Latino families also build their futures together, with grandparents, parents, and children sharing responsibility for supporting one another.

Economic stability—housing affordability, childcare, transportation, healthcare, and retirement security—is the necessary foundation for long-term wealth building. If California wants to break cycles of economic insecurity, it must address the pressures families face today while rebuilding systems that once created pathways to mobility and wealth—and expanding pathways into the innovation economy accelerated by emerging technologies.

California must modernize how economic mobility investments are structured so education, workforce, housing, transportation, and family support systems work together to support long-term opportunity and ensure a just transition for all households in the face of rapid technological change.

At the same time, the state must recognize the growing role of Latino entrepreneurship and small business enterprise in driving economic growth. Latino entrepreneurs are among the fastest-growing drivers of new business formation in California.<sup>36</sup> Expanding access to capital, markets, investments, and ownership opportunities for these businesses is not simply a small business strategy—it is central to California's long-term economic future. California is home to 30 of the top 50 artificial intelligence companies<sup>37</sup> driving global economic growth, yet Latino communities remain underrepresented in building, funding, and owning companies in the technology and venture ecosystem—highlighting the need for a more inclusive approach and access to capital across all stages of company formation.

The Latino experience must be central to shaping our state and nation's education, workforce, and venture capital policies to invest in the fastest-growing, youngest cohort of innovators.

The policies outlined in this agenda aim to rebuild and help reimagine California's opportunity infrastructure so that families can move from: survival → stability → mobility → wealth → agency.

California's prosperity will ultimately depend on whether the working families who power its economy are able to share in it, amidst a growing concentration of power and wealth among a few stakeholders.



**LATINAS, IN PARTICULAR, OFTEN CARRY THE ECONOMIC WEIGHT OF THEIR FAMILIES—BALANCING WORK, CAREGIVING, AND COMMUNITY RESPONSIBILITIES WHILE TRYING TO CREATE STABILITY FOR THE NEXT GENERATION.**

# 1. Infrastructure for Shared Prosperity

## OVERVIEW

**E**conomic mobility depends on systems that treat education, housing, workforce development, and care systems as economic mobility infrastructure. These systems determine whether individuals and families can access opportunity, participate in the workforce, build skills, and transition from financial stability to long-term wealth and, ultimately, agency.

Today, structural constraints in the state’s fiscal architecture—which directly shape housing development, education, and workforce systems—have weakened these pathways. For example, chronic underinvestment—exacerbated by structural limits in California’s tax system, including elements of Proposition 13—has destabilized public education funding and strained the state’s talent pipeline.

At the same time, housing scarcity has become one of the largest barriers to economic mobility. California faces a severe housing supply shortage, particularly for starter homes that allow renters to transition into ownership and start their wealth building journey. This challenge is especially significant for Latino households—56% of Latinos in California are renters, many of whom are mortgage-ready but unable to find attainable homes to purchase due to limited housing supply.<sup>38</sup> In the past year, we have also seen the increasing role of algorithmic price fixing impacting rental prices that could unfairly increase renter costs. It is estimated that a \$100 increase in rent can lead to a 9% increase in homelessness.<sup>39</sup>

Workforce participation is also constrained by gaps in childcare, transportation, healthcare, and continued digital literacy upskilling access that allow families to remain connected to higher wage employment and training opportunities.

### PROPOSAL 1 – Stable Revenue for Economic Mobility Infrastructure

California’s ability to invest in mobility infrastructure has been constrained by structural limits in its fiscal system.

- ▶ Revisit structural elements of Proposition 13 to ensure commercial and high-value property contribute equitably to long-term public investment.
- ▶ Expand progressive revenue sources tied to luxury consumption, financial transactions, and high-value sectors—including technology and digital services—to ensure that the wealth generated by these industries is more equitably reinvested in communities historically excluded from opportunity.
- ▶ Establish a constitutionally protected California Wealth Infrastructure Fund dedicated to strengthening economic mobility systems including education, workforce development, housing access, and essential workforce supports.

### PROPOSAL 2 – Debt-Free Pathways to High-Wage Work

California’s economic mobility systems must ensure that higher education and workforce training translate directly into access to high-wage careers.

- ▶ Guarantee tuition-free community college and expand need-based financial support across the California Community Colleges, CSU, and UC systems for working- and middle-class families.

- ▶ Align regional workforce collaboratives with high-growth sectors—including climate resilience, advanced manufacturing, healthcare, and artificial intelligence—by leveraging and expanding California Jobs First’s regional, community-led economic and workforce strategies.
- ▶ Expand and make accessible paid, multi-disciplined apprenticeships and alternative credential pathways—including data science, cyber, AI and ethics, healthcare, construction management, and public interest technology infrastructure—that translate directly into wage growth and long-term economic mobility, scaling apprenticeship models that are already expanding Latino participation in high-growth sectors.
- ▶ Modernize the deployment of workforce training investments, including the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and related workforce programs, by increasing flexibility so resources can support access to training, accelerated credential pathways, and measurable career mobility outcomes rather than narrow program compliance metrics.
- ▶ Align state economic development incentives with regional workforce strategies to ensure that job creation in high-growth sectors occurs in underserved communities and that employment opportunities are located where talent pipelines are being developed.



### PROPOSAL 3 – Housing as a Pathway to Economic Mobility and Wealth

Housing is a foundational economic mobility system. California must both increase housing supply—particularly starter homes—and create clear, aligned pathways that allow renters to transition into ownership and long-term wealth building. Without intentional alignment between housing production, financing, and access, new supply will not translate into economic mobility for working families.

- ▶ Accelerate the development of starter homes and workforce housing by reforming land-use barriers, reducing speculative land holding, and expanding development opportunities on underutilized public land, including enabling pathways such as condoization of Auxiliary Dwelling Units-s (ADU), lot splits, and incentives for townhome development. Establish a statewide starter home strategy—including a dedicated task force—to advance solutions such as condo defect liability reform, targeted state financing and loan products, and coordinated public-private investment to ensure starter home development is financially viable at scale.
- ▶ Expand first-generation homeownership through down-payment assistance, shared-equity ownership models, and targeted starter home development for mortgage-ready households. Align financing tools—including down-payment assistance, affordable mortgage products, and homebuyer preparation—so that increased housing supply translates directly into ownership opportunities for renters, including many Latino households.
- ▶ Recognize renters as part of the wealth-building continuum by establishing refundable renters’ tax credits and other near-term relief measures that reduce housing cost burdens while households build pathways to ownership.
- ▶ Deploy public land strategies—including land banking, community land trusts, cooperative housing models, and shared-equity ownership structures—to expand access to starter homes while protecting long-term affordability and preventing displacement. Encourage responsible participation from financial institutions and developers through targeted mortgage products, down-payment assistance partnerships, and incentives to build starter homes and workforce housing, while prioritizing essential worker housing in high-cost regions.

#### TURN HOUSING INTO A PATHWAY TO OWNERSHIP

**HOUSING MUST FUNCTION AS A BRIDGE TO ECONOMIC MOBILITY—BY EXPANDING SUPPLY, ESPECIALLY STARTER HOMES, AND ALIGNING FINANCING AND ACCESS SO RENTERS CAN TRANSITION INTO OWNERSHIP AND LONG-TERM WEALTH BUILDING.**

## PROPOSAL 4 – Economic Stability Supports for Workforce Participation

Economic mobility depends on care and support systems that allow individuals to participate consistently in education, workforce training, and employment.

- ▶ Invest in care infrastructure by expanding access to affordable childcare and adult care while strengthening the care economy workforce through higher wages, improved benefits, and career advancement pathways for caregivers.
- ▶ Expand transportation access as economic mobility infrastructure, investing in reliable and people-centered transit systems that improve access to jobs, training, and education—particularly for workers and students in underserved communities.
- ▶ Strengthen healthcare access as a foundation for workforce participation and economic mobility, recognizing that stable health coverage and access to care are essential to sustained employment and educational attainment.

## 11. California's Intergenerational Prosperity Compact

### OVERVIEW

California's long-term prosperity depends on whether families can build, protect, and transfer wealth across generations. Yet large disparities remain. Median Latino household wealth in California is estimated to be roughly one-tenth that of white households, leaving many families without the financial cushion needed to weather emergencies or invest in long-term opportunity.<sup>40</sup>

California should establish an Intergenerational Prosperity Compact that treats asset building, financial stability, and retirement security as essential public infrastructure.

This approach recognizes that wealth is built across the life cycle—from early asset ownership, to stable income and retirement savings during working years, to the ability to transfer assets to the next generation.

### PROPOSAL 1 – Universal Opportunity Accounts for Every Child

California should expand existing child asset programs—including CalKIDS and the HOPE for Children Trust Account Program—into a universal Opportunity Account system. The HOPE program currently provides publicly funded trust accounts for certain vulnerable youth. California should build on this model and make child trust accounts universal so every child in the state begins life with an early financial asset that can grow over time.

To ensure long-term stability and independence from annual budget cycles, California should establish a California Opportunity Trust, a permanent public investment fund dedicated to financing Opportunity Accounts and generational wealth initiatives.

- ▶ Establish Opportunity Accounts for every child in California automatically.
- ▶ Expand the HOPE trust account model statewide so that all children receive a starter asset, with larger progressive deposits for children in low-income households and vulnerable populations.
- ▶ Allow funds to support multiple mobility pathways, including higher education, career training, small business formation, and first-generation homeownership.

**CLOSE THE WEALTH GAP  
TO SECURE CALIFORNIA'S  
FUTURE**

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- ▶ Enable additional contributions from families, employers, philanthropy, and community partners.
- ▶ Capitalize a California Opportunity Trust—a professionally governed long-term investment portfolio designed to generate stable returns over time.
- ▶ Fund the Trust through dedicated revenue streams tied to emerging sectors of the modern economy, including technology infrastructure, financial transactions, luxury consumption, and climate markets.

## PROPOSAL 2 – Financial Protection and Wealth Guidance Infrastructure

Many families lack access to the financial tools and guidance needed to protect and grow assets and transfer wealth across generations. These gaps are structural, reflecting financial systems that often fail to provide affordable protection products, estate planning tools, and trustworthy financial advice.

California should expand access to financial tools and wealth guidance systems that help families protect, grow, and transfer assets across generations.

- ▶ Expand access to affordable life insurance through employer partnerships, group purchasing models, and statewide pooled purchasing programs. Encourage employer-sponsored and community-based life insurance plans that provide meaningful financial protection for working families.
- ▶ Expand access to culturally competent financial advising, investment guidance, and estate planning services that help families build, protect, and transfer wealth through savings, retirement accounts, diversified investments, and legal tools for intergenerational asset transfer.
- ▶ Strengthen state-level oversight of financial products to guard against predatory lending, high-fee financial products, and abusive financial practices as federal oversight declines. Ensure strong protections for ITIN filers<sup>41</sup> so they can safely access financial services without risk of misuse of their personal data or exposure to immigration enforcement.
- ▶ Expand access to financial tools and asset-building opportunities through schools, community-based organizations, employers, and other trusted institutions, ensuring families can access tax credits, savings programs, and wealth-building resources.

## PROPOSAL 3 – Universal Retirement Security for California’s Workforce

Millions of California workers lack access to retirement savings systems that allow them to build long-term financial security.

Latino workers are disproportionately represented in sectors that historically offer fewer retirement benefits, contributing to lower retirement savings rates and increased long-term financial vulnerability.

California should strengthen retirement infrastructure so that all workers—including employees, gig workers, entrepreneurs, and small business employees—can build retirement savings throughout their working lives.

- ▶ Expand portable retirement accounts and benefits that follow workers across employers, industries, and gig-based work arrangements, ensuring continuity of savings and protections for workers facing job transitions, automation, or contract-based employment.
- ▶ Expand retirement savings access for entrepreneurs and employees of small businesses through simplified and pooled retirement plan options.

- ▶ Strengthen and modernize the CalSavers program so it functions as a more robust retirement platform—addressing current limitations such as low default contribution levels, lack of employer matching options, and participation barriers that limit long-term retirement savings.
- ▶ Strengthen requirements and incentives for employers, financial institutions, and large corporations to contribute to retirement savings through mechanisms such as automatic enrollment, employer matching, and low-cost pooled investment options, while leveraging the scale of state-administered retirement systems to reduce costs and expand access for workers without employer-sponsored plans.

## III. A New California Master Plan for a Skills-Based Mobility Economy

### OVERVIEW

California's 1960 Master Plan for Higher Education helped build one of the most powerful public education systems in the world. For decades, it served as a reliable engine of economic mobility, connecting students to careers and helping fuel California's economic growth. However, for decades now, the plan no longer reflects California's economic, demographic, or workforce realities.

Latino students now make up the majority of California's public school enrollment, yet they remain underrepresented among college graduates and in many high-wage professions. At the same time, California faces severe workforce shortages in fields such as healthcare, law, engineering, and scientific research. Training pipelines remain slow, expensive, and overly centralized.

Rising tuition, housing unaffordability, and labor market disruptions have weakened higher education's role as a reliable pathway to economic mobility. California has already begun modernizing workforce pathways through initiatives such as the Master Plan for Career Education, which seeks to align education and workforce systems around regional labor market demand and career pathways.

Building on these efforts, California should modernize the higher education Master Plan into a Mobility and Workforce Compact that aligns the California Community Colleges, California State University (CSU), and University of California (UC) systems around workforce demand, equity outcomes, and skills-based advancement.

Modernizing California's skills-based mobility system should also include updating how workforce training investments such as the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) are deployed. Aligning these resources with regional labor market demand, accelerated credential pathways, and sector partnerships will allow workforce systems to better support long-term career mobility and wage growth.

### PROPOSAL 1 – Rebalance Institutional Roles to Meet State Workforce Needs

California's higher education institutions must be able to respond more quickly to workforce shortages in critical sectors.

- ▶ Expand California Community Colleges and CSU authority, funding, and clinical partnerships to train doctors, nurses, allied health professionals, lawyers, and applied technologists and scientists more rapidly and affordably.

### MODERNIZE HIGHER EDUCATION FOR TODAY'S CALIFORNIA

**CALIFORNIA'S OUTDATED HIGHER EDUCATION MODEL NO LONGER REFLECTS THE STATE'S WORKFORCE OR ITS STUDENTS—LATINOS NOW MAKE UP THE MAJORITY OF PUBLIC SCHOOL ENROLLMENT BUT REMAIN UNDERREPRESENTED IN COLLEGE COMPLETION AND HIGH-WAGE CAREERS—REQUIRING A MORE RESPONSIVE SYSTEM ALIGNED WITH TODAY'S ECONOMIC DEMANDS.**

- ▶ Incentivize distributed training models that expand access to professional education across regions of the state, particularly in underserved communities facing workforce shortages.
- ▶ Create accelerated and stackable credential pathways connecting community colleges, CSU, and UC programs so students can progress more efficiently into high-demand, multidisciplinary careers—including but not limited to technology, advanced manufacturing, clean energy, cyber, data science, tech policy, and health.
- ▶ Modernize community college infrastructure to expand educational pathways, increase Latino practitioners and educators, and computing faculty to help remove barriers of entry and retention.

## PROPOSAL 2 – Skills-Based Hiring and Credential Recognition

Many workers possess valuable skills that are not recognized by traditional degree requirements. Expanding skills-based hiring can open new pathways to economic mobility while helping employers address workforce shortages.

- ▶ Continue eliminating unnecessary bachelor’s degree requirements for state jobs and expand skills-based hiring practices across public agencies.
- ▶ Encourage private employers to adopt skills-based hiring practices through procurement incentives, workforce partnerships, and employer-led credential frameworks, while strengthening partnerships between postsecondary institutions serving high numbers of Latino students—including Hispanic Serving Institutions and community colleges—and high-growth sectors to expand access to internships and apprenticeships that build in-demand technical skills and support workforce readiness.
- ▶ Direct licensing boards and regulatory agencies to recognize industry credentials, clinical hours, and registered apprenticeships as qualifying pathways into professional careers. Ensure that licensing requirements are directly aligned with the skills and competencies needed for the work.

## PROPOSAL 3 – Equity, Integration, and Institutional Accountability

California’s higher education systems must better reflect the diversity of the state and ensure that public investment translates into workforce opportunity. Within the constraints of Proposition 209, the state should strengthen accountability for inclusive hiring, student success, and service to underserved communities and regions.

- ▶ Tie a portion of state funding to measurable progress on inclusive hiring, student success, and institutional accountability, including transparent public reporting on faculty and leadership diversity, equity gaps in student outcomes, and service to geographically and economically underserved communities.
- ▶ Align research funding priorities with California’s workforce needs and regional labor market demands.
- ▶ Require institutions to demonstrate that graduates in high-demand sectors are entering California’s workforce, with a focus on outcomes in underserved communities and regions. Align state incentives so that job growth in these sectors occurs in those same communities.
- ▶ Align higher education capital investments with regional housing development and workforce housing strategies to reduce cost-of-attendance pressures that undermine completion.



## IV. Latino Enterprise, Capital, and Ownership Infrastructure

### OVERVIEW

Over the past decade, Latino entrepreneurship has grown dramatically. California is now home to hundreds of thousands of Latino-owned businesses generating tens of billions in economic activity and supporting job creation across industries.<sup>42</sup> At the same time, the state's fiscal outlook is increasingly tied to AI-driven innovation while facing projected budget shortfalls—making the broader innovation economy, from small businesses to high-growth startups and deep tech, critical to future revenue generation and economic mobility. Yet access to capital—from small business financing to venture capital and institutional investment—remains fragmented, limiting who can participate in and benefit from the state's innovation economy.

Latino entrepreneurs are among the fastest-growing drivers of new business formation, yet they remain significantly underrepresented as tech founders, venture capital participants, and institutional investors. To realize the full potential of entrepreneurship, just labor transitions, and inclusive ownership, California must expand access to the innovation economy.

California is home to the nation's largest pension funds, with more than \$950 billion in assets under management, but institutional capital remains largely disconnected from inclusive investment strategies. Increasing transparency and accountability across pension funds, endowments, foundations, and private markets—alongside modernizing Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs)—will be critical to ensuring small businesses can access capital and adapt to technological change.

Latino-owned businesses remain significantly undercapitalized relative to their economic contribution. Structural barriers—including limited access to credit, venture capital, procurement pipelines, and growth-stage financing—prevent many businesses from scaling and building long-term wealth. Expanding access to capital, ownership, and markets is therefore essential not only for Latino economic mobility but for California's broader economic growth.

California should treat entrepreneurship as core economic infrastructure and align public, institutional, and pension capital with inclusive investment strategies so that the returns generated by innovation are broadly shared.

### PROPOSAL 1 – Inclusive Capital Architecture

Access to capital remains one of the most significant barriers facing small and emerging businesses. At the same time, California's innovation economy—driven by venture capital, institutional investors, and philanthropic capital—continues to shape where wealth is created and who participates in it. Yet Latino/a founders and investors remain significantly underrepresented across this capital stack.

As the landscape of tech entrepreneurship evolves rapidly, California must ensure Latino/a communities are included not only as business owners but as founders, fund managers, and investors shaping the future of innovation. This requires coordinated action across the full capital ecosystem—including venture capital, public pension funds, philanthropy, and community-based finance—to expand access to capital, diversify investment decision-makers, and support wealth building in Latino communities.

### UNLOCK LATINO ENTREPRENEURSHIP FOR CALIFORNIA'S GROWTH

**LATINO-OWNED BUSINESSES FACE SIGNIFICANT UNDERCAPITALIZATION AND STRUCTURAL BARRIERS RELATIVE TO THEIR ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTIONS; EXPANDING ACCESS TO CAPITAL, OWNERSHIP AND MARKETS IS ESSENTIAL TO ENABLING THESE BUSINESSES TO THRIVE.**

- ▶ Increase the number of Latino/a emerging fund managers supported by major state pension funds and institutional investors. Develop new fund-of-funds and seeding models that expand access to venture capital across stages of growth.
- ▶ Encourage foundations and philanthropic institutions to deploy mission-related investments (MRIs) and program-related investments (PRIs) into for-profit ventures and funds that expand access to capital for underrepresented founders and support inclusive technology development.
- ▶ Invest in public interest advanced technology hubs that expand access to compute in the age of AI—including high-performance computing, cloud infrastructure, quantum, and applied cybersecurity—to support research and development and scaling for Latino-led startups and mid-sized companies.
- ▶ Expand public-private investment funds and strengthen CDFI partnerships to provide flexible capital for early-stage and growing businesses, particularly microenterprises and small businesses with fewer than 10 employees that often lack access to traditional lending, while supporting digital equity.
- ▶ Establish and expand state-supported CDFI investment initiatives, loan guarantees, and credit enhancement programs that enable responsible lending and support commercial property acquisition and place-of-business ownership for small businesses.
- ▶ Ensure state-supported capital programs are accessible to entrepreneurs who are often excluded from traditional financing pathways, including by aligning eligibility, outreach, and program design with the needs of diverse small business owners.
- ▶ Strengthen staffing and technical expertise within state agencies such as the California Office of the Small Business Advocate (CalOSBA) so that capital programs are designed and implemented to meet the needs of historically excluded entrepreneurs.

## PROPOSAL 2 – Procurement as Economic Infrastructure and Accelerant of Inclusive Innovation

Public procurement represents one of the largest economic opportunities available to small businesses, startups, and enterprises, yet many entrepreneurs face barriers entering government contracting systems. California should modernize procurement so it functions as a more accessible, accountable, and equitable pathway for business growth and market participation.

- ▶ Clarify and strengthen state definitions of “small business” to ensure procurement opportunities are accessible to genuinely small and emerging firms rather than large corporations qualifying under existing thresholds.
- ▶ Reform state procurement systems to expand participation by small, minority-owned, and micro-enterprises by simplifying contracting requirements, providing technical assistance and coaching, and expanding access to working capital. Establish clear accountability by setting and increasing agency-level participation goals for small and disadvantaged businesses (including SDB, WOSB, and SDVOSB) and requiring departments to meet measurable targets.
- ▶ Leverage public procurement to expand opportunities for small businesses, startups, and community-based firms to compete for contracts in high-growth sectors, including technology and infrastructure, while ensuring that procurement practices protect data privacy and prevent harmful or extractive uses of public systems.
- ▶ Ban noncompete agreements that limit worker mobility and prevent entrepreneurs and small firms from competing for public contracts.



### PROPOSAL 3 - Infrastructure for Entrepreneurship and Business Ownership

Entrepreneurship pathways should be integrated into California's workforce and education systems so individuals can pursue business ownership at multiple points across their educational and career journeys. California must also strengthen the ecosystem of organizations and infrastructure that help entrepreneurs across sectors navigate capital access, licensing, business development, technology modernization, and competitiveness. As the landscape of tech entrepreneurship continues to evolve rapidly, California must ensure Latino/a communities are included as creators, founders, and investors in emerging innovation sectors—and share in the wealth generated by these industries.

- ▶ Expand incubators, innovation hubs, and public-private technology infrastructure that connect entrepreneurs with research institutions and high-growth sectors such as artificial intelligence, climate technology, and advanced manufacturing. Increase state investment in entrepreneurship education, business development, and venture capital pathways at colleges and universities—including fellowships and training programs that prepare students to become founders and investors.
- ▶ Invest in community-based organizations and trusted intermediaries that provide culturally competent business advising, legal services, and technical assistance, while coordinating capital access and business development across California's regional economies.
- ▶ Support business ownership models—including worker cooperatives and shared ownership structures—that enable workers to build equity and ownership stakes in businesses, share in profits, and retain wealth locally, through targeted technical assistance, capital access, and enabling policy frameworks.
- ▶ Simplify state and local licensing and permitting processes, expand digital and decentralized access points for entrepreneurs seeking guidance, and ensure strong protections for sensitive business and personal data.



#### STRENGTHEN INFRASTRUCTURE FOR LATINO ENTREPRENEURS

TO FOSTER VIBRANT  
ENTREPRENEURSHIP  
IN CALIFORNIA,  
PATHWAYS TO BUSINESS  
OWNERSHIP MUST  
BE WOVEN INTO THE  
WORKFORCE AND  
EDUCATION SYSTEMS,  
ENABLING INDIVIDUALS  
TO SHARE IN THE  
WEALTH GENERATED BY  
EMERGING INDUSTRIES.

## V. AI Governance and Public Value in the Intelligence Economy

### OVERVIEW

**A**rtificial intelligence (AI) is transforming economies, labor markets, and social systems at unprecedented speed. Without strong governance, AI development risks deepening inequality, eroding privacy protections, displacing workers, and concentrating economic power in a small number of corporations.

California sits at the center of the global technology economy and is home to the world's leading artificial intelligence companies, research universities, and venture capital ecosystem. At the same time, many communities—including Latino workers who represent a large share of the state's workforce—remain underrepresented in the technology sectors shaping the AI economy.

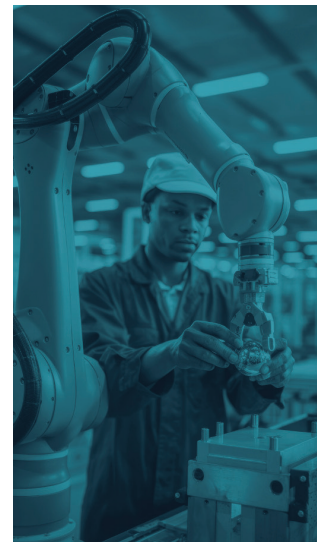
California should lead the nation in responsible AI governance by establishing a regulatory and investment framework that protects communities, safeguards the environment, democratizes access to innovation, and ensures that the economic value generated by artificial intelligence produces broad public benefit.

As the home of major public research universities and publicly funded innovation systems, California must also ensure that the economic value generated through AI—including public research, computing infrastructure, and intellectual property—creates long-term opportunity and public return.

### PROPOSAL 1 – Youth and Community Harm Safeguards

Artificial intelligence systems increasingly shape decisions about education, employment, health, housing, and public benefits. Without appropriate safeguards, these systems risk reinforcing discrimination and limiting opportunity.

- ▶ Establish age-appropriate, linguistically accurate, and non-discriminatory design standards for AI systems used in education, employment screening, housing, public health, and social service programs, ensuring reliable performance across languages and for populations with limited English proficiency, particularly in high-stakes or rights-based applications.
- ▶ Restrict or ban surveillance technology in pre-schools, K–12 education systems, and other government-funded educational settings.
- ▶ Require algorithmic impact assessments and civil rights audits before deployment of AI tools in public institutions, placing the burden on companies to demonstrate that their systems do not produce discriminatory or harmful outcomes.
- ▶ Strengthen protections against biometric surveillance, facial recognition misuse, and automated decision-making systems that restrict opportunity or violate civil rights, particularly for minors and protected classes. Increase safeguards on the use of location data generated by mobile devices and applications to prevent access or misuse by law enforcement, data brokers, or other entities without knowledge or consent.



**CALIFORNIA'S YOUTHFUL LATINO POPULATION FACES GROWING RISKS FROM ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN EDUCATION AND PUBLIC SERVICES, WHICH CAN REINFORCE DISCRIMINATION AND LIMIT OPPORTUNITIES. WE MUST ACT NOW TO SAFEGUARD THEIR FUTURE BY ENFORCING STRICT DESIGN STANDARDS FOR AI SYSTEMS, BANNING HARMFUL SURVEILLANCE IN SCHOOLS, AND REQUIRING IMPACT ASSESSMENTS TO PREVENT DISCRIMINATION.**

## PROPOSAL 2 – Democratic Innovation, Public Infrastructure, and Shared AI Wealth

The economic benefits of artificial intelligence should not be limited to a small number of corporations or investors. California should ensure that small businesses, startups, universities, and public institutions have access to the tools, infrastructure, and capital needed to participate in and benefit from the AI economy.

- ▶ Expand public computing infrastructure—including initiatives such as CalCompute—and establish a dedicated public interest compute fund to ensure startups, small businesses, universities, and community innovators have access to high-performance computing, cloud infrastructure, and advanced models needed to build and deploy AI technologies. Pair this with targeted public-private investment aligned with the state’s broader capital strategy to support inclusive innovation ecosystems.
- ▶ Create public-interest AI research hubs across the UC, CSU, and community college systems that support open innovation, workforce training, and technology development. Expand investment in AI literacy and capacity-building for nonprofits, journalists, organizers, public sector, and municipal leaders to ensure broad participation in shaping and governing AI systems.
- ▶ Establish mechanisms that allow California to capture public return on AI-driven economic growth, including leveraging university intellectual property, public research investments, and strategic public pension fund participation in emerging technology sectors.
- ▶ Develop frameworks for public ownership stakes, revenue-sharing mechanisms, and open innovation models tied to publicly funded AI research so that the long-term economic value generated by artificial intelligence contributes to shared prosperity.

## PROPOSAL 3 – Environmental and Community Standards for AI Infrastructure

Large-scale AI infrastructure—including data centers and computing clusters—requires substantial energy, water, land, and environmental resources, with impacts on air quality, noise, waste, and surrounding communities. These systems should be developed in ways that protect community health, safeguard the environment, and ensure local benefit and accountability.

- ▶ Classify large-scale data centers as critical infrastructure subject to enhanced environmental review, energy requirements, and emergency preparedness standards. Ensure that data centers are not eligible for by-right zoning, requiring discretionary review, public input, and local approval processes. Prohibit development on contaminated and environmentally overburdened sites. Prevent the concentration of data centers in communities with histories of redlining and environmental burden.
- ▶ Require enforceable community benefit agreements or comparable mechanisms for major AI infrastructure projects that include workforce pipelines, housing contributions, and community reinvestment. Require advance disclosure of projected water and energy use, as well as ongoing public reporting, so that community-based organizations and local governments can meaningfully engage in decision-making.
- ▶ Establish transparency requirements for energy consumption, water use, air quality impacts, noise, waste, and pollution associated with large AI infrastructure projects. Require assessment and public reporting on community-level impacts, including effects on housing values, local economic development, and displacement of other productive land uses. Strengthen state and local capacity for monitoring and enforcement, ensuring that data on environmental and community impacts is accessible to government officials and residents.

### DEMOCRATIZE INNOVATION

**ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE SHOULD BENEFIT EVERYONE, NOT JUST A SELECT FEW CORPORATIONS OR INVESTORS. BY PROMOTING SHARED PROSPERITY AND INCLUSIVE PARTICIPATION, WE CAN ENSURE THAT ALL VOICES CONTRIBUTE TO SHAPING AND GOVERNING AI SYSTEMS FOR THE GREATER GOOD.**

- ▶ Require state agencies and AI infrastructure providers to develop coordinated emergency preparedness and resilience plans addressing risks such as grid strain, rolling blackouts, and cybersecurity threats. Ensure that infrastructure expansion does not compromise energy reliability for surrounding communities and includes investment in clean energy and grid capacity.

#### **PROPOSAL 4 – Workforce Protection and Economic Adaptation**

Artificial intelligence will reshape labor markets across many industries. California must ensure that workers are supported through this transition and that new opportunities are broadly accessible.

- ▶ Establish a statewide AI Workforce Transition Initiative that provides earn-while-you-learn reskilling programs, wage insurance, and fellowship-style pathways—such as digital service corps—for workers affected by automation. Prioritize scalable pathways into high-demand sectors where barriers to entry are lower and demand is growing, including cybersecurity, healthcare, and energy.
- ▶ Expand partnerships between community colleges, CSU campuses, labor unions, and employers to develop accelerated, skills-based training and apprenticeship pathways aligned to high-growth sectors, including cybersecurity (with strong apprenticeship models), healthcare (leveraging culturally competent and multilingual talent), and energy.
- ▶ Require companies receiving AI-related tax incentives or public investment to invest in worker training, reskilling programs, and apprenticeship pipelines that support workforce transition and mobility.
- ▶ Enact protections against discriminatory automated decision systems (ADS) in recruiting, hiring, wages, and workplace surveillance to prevent bias and protect worker rights.





### CHAPTER 3

# *DIGNITY: Defining Dignity as a Governing Standard*

# DIGNITY: Defining Dignity as a Governing Standard

California is confronting intersecting challenges, from the rising cost of living to climate-driven disaster and rapid technological change, that contribute to debates over public safety, institutional trust, and who belongs. California’s long-term stability and prosperity will depend on whether all residents can live with safety, security, and full participation in civic and economic life.

Latino families across the state are making decisions about how California will respond to a federal government that targets Latino communities through deportation, surveillance, and criminalization. While Latinos consistently rank the economy and cost of living as their top priorities,<sup>43</sup> a central question remains whether the growth that has made California the fourth-largest economy in the world<sup>44</sup> will translate into broad-based stability and economic opportunity or continue to produce uneven outcomes and persistent disparities that leave many communities behind. For too long, Latino communities have been repeatedly called upon to shape electoral outcomes without seeing commensurate investment or outcomes reflected in systems that consistently deliver stability, protection, and opportunity.

This reality reveals a structural challenge: California’s systems of governance have not kept pace with the people they are meant to serve. Access to stability, safety, and opportunity is not consistently guaranteed, but instead shaped by income, immigration status, geography, and proximity to power. California cannot meaningfully address affordability, housing instability, public safety, climate resilience, democratic legitimacy, or economic mobility without first establishing dignity as a governing baseline across its systems.

## FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION

To operationalize dignity as a governing standard, this pillar advances a coordinated, systems-level policy framework across three interconnected domains. These domains are mutually reinforcing the ideas that: without protection, belonging leaves communities vulnerable; without active participation, protection fails to drive long-term change; and without a sense of belonging, participation excludes those most affected. By embedding rights, accountability, representation, and community stability across systems, California can ensure that all residents have the safety, stability, and power to fully participate in the state’s future.

### 1. Belonging, Community Stability, & State Protections

This framework acknowledges and protects individuals within public systems, ensuring equitable access to essential rights, services, and infrastructure crucial for community stability. It redefines belonging based on residency rather than immigration status, expands access to healthcare and vital services, tackles housing instability and homelessness, strengthens disaster preparedness and recovery systems, safeguards bodily autonomy and access to necessary medical care, and invests in the nonprofit, cultural, and community-based infrastructures that are vital for the resilience of California’s diverse communities.

### 2. Freedom from Criminalization & Surveillance

This framework identifies harms that must be addressed and restructures systems that generate disproportionate impacts on communities. It aims to reduce over-policing and incarceration, limit immigration detention, establish enforceable protections against surveillance and data exploitation, and tackle algorithmic discrimination, focusing on removing the concentration of risk away from California’s most vulnerable residents.



**FOR TOO LONG, LATINO COMMUNITIES HAVE BEEN REPEATEDLY CALLED UPON TO SHAPE ELECTORAL OUTCOMES WITHOUT SEEING COMMENSURATE INVESTMENT OR OUTCOMES REFLECTED IN SYSTEMS THAT CONSISTENTLY DELIVER STABILITY, PROTECTION, AND OPPORTUNITY.**

### 3. Democratic Participation & Civic Power

This framework empowers communities by enhancing their representation, visibility, and infrastructure to influence the systems that govern their lives. It focuses on expanding voting rights and protections, strengthening civic engagement and political education, investing in independent and community-based media, and safeguarding narrative and cultural power. Moreover, it advances equitable representation across government, the judiciary, and public leadership at all levels, while promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion as fundamental practices of accountable governance.

## *Defining Dignity as a Governing Standard*

Dignity is a governing standard. It determines whether individuals and families can live with safety, stability, and autonomy, and whether they are able to fully participate in the economic, civic, and social life of the state. Operationalizing dignity requires California to establish clear, enforceable guarantees across public systems. These guarantees include:

- ▶ The right to belong, regardless of immigration status
- ▶ The right to live free from discrimination, criminalization, and family separation
- ▶ The right to privacy and protection from surveillance and data exploitation
- ▶ The right to access housing, healthcare, and essential services necessary for stability
- ▶ The right to safe and healthy environments, free from disproportionate environmental harm
- ▶ The right to bodily autonomy and access to medically necessary care, including gender-affirming care
- ▶ The right to full civic and democratic participation, including representation in decision-making

To embed these guarantees, the state must take an affirmative and coordinated role in:

- ▶ Define and enforce rights through statute, regulation, and constitutional authority
- ▶ Align agencies to ensure consistent access, implementation, and accountability
- ▶ Limit systems that produce harm, including over-policing, exclusionary zoning, and unchecked surveillance
- ▶ Invest in community infrastructure, including nonprofit organizations, cultural institutions, and civic institutions
- ▶ Sustain diversity, equity, and inclusion practices across public systems as a core component of equitable governance and public trust
- ▶ Advance representation and transparency across all levels of government

# 1. Defining Rights: Belonging, Community Stability, & State Protections

## OVERVIEW

California’s current framework conditions access to rights, services, and protections on immigration status, income, and prior contact with the criminal legal system, producing a fragmented landscape in which many residents are excluded from full participation in public life. This uneven landscape also extends to identity-based protections, including for LGBTQ+ communities facing growing barriers to care, safety, and full participation in public life.

For immigrant and mixed-status families, this results in fear, instability, and reduced engagement with essential services, including healthcare, housing, and public benefits.<sup>45</sup> For individuals impacted by the criminal legal system, long-term barriers to employment, housing, and civic participation persist well beyond the completion of a sentence.<sup>46</sup> Low-income communities and communities of color disproportionately bear the impacts of housing instability and homelessness.<sup>47</sup> These challenges are further compounded by disaster response and recovery systems that often leave the most vulnerable communities with fewer resources and slower pathways to recovery following climate events.<sup>48</sup> Across California’s youthful, growing communities of color, public health, climate, and other disasters are not just one-time emergencies but accelerators of displacement, housing precarity, and long-term community destabilization. These conditions are not incidental. They are the result of policy choices that define belonging narrowly and distribute protections unevenly.

A dignity-centered approach requires California to assert its authority to define belonging based on residency, community ties, and participation, while ensuring that all residents can access the conditions necessary for long-term stability, including housing, healthcare, bodily autonomy, economic opportunity, and community continuity. This section advances a coordinated framework to move California from conditional inclusion to guaranteed belonging by establishing enforceable rights, stabilizing communities, and strengthening the infrastructure that supports full participation.

## PROPOSAL 1 – California Equal Protection & Belonging Act

To expand access to meaningful opportunity, California must enact a comprehensive, enforceable statewide “floor” of rights that guarantees core protections for all residents, regardless of immigration status. This includes ensuring that identity-based protections, bodily autonomy, and access to medically necessary care are consistently upheld across all state-regulated systems. By aligning legal protections, service access, and agency accountability, this act would eliminate fragmentation across systems and ensure that dignity is consistently upheld in how the state governs.

- ▶ Codify access to essential services, including healthcare, housing, food assistance, and education, regardless of immigration status where permissible under state authority.
- ▶ Enshrine the right to family unity, requiring all state agencies to prevent family separation and coordinate response protocols during enforcement actions.
- ▶ Guarantee enforceable protections for LGBTQ+ individuals across public systems, including non-discrimination protections, access to gender-affirming care, and safeguards against state cooperation with out-of-state efforts to criminalize patients, providers, or families seeking medically necessary care.

### FOSTER BELONGING THROUGH DIGNITY

**CALIFORNIA MUST REDEFINE BELONGING TO INCLUDE ALL RESIDENTS— ALIGNING LEGAL SAFEGUARDS WITH SERVICE ACCESS TO UPHOLD DIGNITY AND FOSTER STABLE, INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES.**

- ▶ Expand language access and language justice infrastructure across all public systems, including courts, healthcare, and education, with support for Indigenous languages.
- ▶ Establish independent oversight of detention conditions and prohibit expansion of immigration detention facilities in California.
- ▶ Guarantee universal, state-funded legal representation and due process protections in immigration proceedings, supported by a permanent statewide legal defense infrastructure and advocate workforce pipeline.
- ▶ Create a statewide Office of Immigrant & Community Inclusion to coordinate implementation, enforcement, and accountability across agencies, while aligning work across existing state entities such as the California Immigration Council.
- ▶ Establish enforceable data privacy protections, including statewide data firewalls that limit sharing of personal information with federal enforcement and regulate corporate misuse.

## PROPOSAL 2 – Golden State Residency Program

To achieve belonging, California should establish a Golden State Residency Program that defines residency—not federal immigration status—as the basis for access to state protections, services, and civic participation. This structural shift would reduce fear, increase engagement with public systems, strengthen economic and community stability across the state, and create a more coherent framework for belonging grounded in California’s own authority.

- ▶ Provide a state-recognized residency identification that enables consistent access to services and protections across agencies.
- ▶ Expand eligibility for public programs based on residency, aligning access to healthcare, workforce programs, housing supports, and safety net systems.
- ▶ Enable full participation in civic and public life, including local governance, advisory bodies, and community decision-making processes.
- ▶ Establish strong data protection safeguards to prevent federal misuse of state-held information.
- ▶ Require cross-agency implementation and standardization to ensure residency status is recognized consistently across programs building on existing state identification infrastructure to streamline implementation.
- ▶ Create clear, multilingual outreach and navigation systems so residents can understand and safely access the benefits and protections connected to residency.

## PROPOSAL 3 – Community Stability Fund

California can lead the nation by establishing a statewide community stability fund that treats housing, nonprofit organizations, cultural institutions, and disaster response systems as essential infrastructure. Research indicates that when these populations have access to stable housing, employment, supportive services, and meaningful engagement opportunities, they are better equipped to contribute to economic growth, thereby driving innovation and productivity.<sup>49</sup> By stabilizing the systems that families rely on, California can reduce homelessness, prevent displacement, strengthen public health, and ensure equitable recovery from economic and climate shocks.

- ▶ Establish a multi-year general operating funding stream for nonprofit and community-based organizations providing essential services, civic engagement, arts and cultural infrastructure, climate outreach, and community stabilization.

- ▶ Direct the new state agency tasked with addressing housing and homelessness to prioritize the root causes of homelessness, integrating preventative measures and expanding access to housing stabilization resources—including rental assistance, supportive services, and wraparound care—to reduce housing precarity across California, especially for families with young children and multi-generational families.
- ▶ Develop a rapid-response emergency funding mechanism to provide immediate financial relief and support, alongside long-term educational initiatives focused on outreach, disaster preparedness, and climate resiliency, ensuring that vulnerable communities can quickly recover from disasters while building future resilience.
- ▶ Fund initiatives that provide pro bono and low bono estate planning services to low-income families, particularly multi-generational households, to help them preserve property and business assets in the face of aging, economic instability, or immigration challenges, ensuring long-term stability and security.
- ▶ Establish local Community Stabilization Task Forces to coordinate efforts across multiple sectors—housing, health, education, and economic development—that facilitate participatory decision-making, promote equitable resource distribution, and engage residents in shaping policies that directly impact their neighborhoods and communities.

#### **PROPOSAL 4 – Civil Rights Restoration & Reintegration Act**

To close persistent gaps, California should enact a comprehensive civil rights and reintegration framework that ensures individuals with prior contact with the criminal legal system are able to fully participate in economic and civic life. Youthful, growing demographic groups are essential to the state’s demographic and economic vitality, representing a significant portion of the population and workforce. By addressing their unique challenges and needs—such as housing instability, displacement, and limited access to resources—California can create an inclusive environment where all residents can thrive.

By removing structural barriers and modernizing civil rights protections, the state can expand opportunity, reduce recidivism, improve family stability, and strengthen long-term public safety and community well-being.

- ▶ Establish protected class status for individuals with prior system contact, prohibiting discrimination in employment, housing, education, lending, and public services.
- ▶ Expand civil rights enforcement mechanisms, including private rights of action and strengthened accountability across state agencies.
- ▶ Advance automatic record sealing and expungement pathways, while strengthening fair chance hiring and housing protections.
- ▶ Prohibit algorithmic discrimination in employment, housing, and credit screening, aligning with broader digital civil rights protections.
- ▶ Strengthen family stability protections, including safeguards that prevent family separation and support caregiving continuity.
- ▶ Require Civil Life Impact Assessments for major legislation to evaluate impacts on individuals and families affected by the criminal legal system.

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#### **ESTABLISH PROTECTED CLASS STATUS FOR REINTEGRATION**

**TO CREATE A TRULY INCLUSIVE CALIFORNIA, WE MUST ESTABLISH PROTECTED CLASS STATUS FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH PRIOR CONTACT WITH THE CRIMINAL LEGAL SYSTEM TO EMPOWER ALL CALIFORNIANS TO FULLY PARTICIPATE IN ECONOMIC AND CIVIC LIFE.**

## II. From Enforcement to Protection and Accountability: Freedom from Criminalization & Surveillance

### OVERVIEW

California's approach to public safety has long relied on systems of enforcement, surveillance, and incarceration, which have disproportionately impacted Latino, immigrant, and low-income communities without addressing the root causes of harm.

Today, these systems are evolving. What was once confined to physical policing now increasingly extends into digital and environmental domains. Surveillance is embedded in algorithms, platforms, and data systems that shape access to employment, housing, credit, healthcare, and public services, often without transparency or accountability. At the same time, the rapid expansion of artificial intelligence and data infrastructure is generating new forms of environmental and public health risk, including increased energy demand, water usage, and the concentration of industrial infrastructure in already overburdened communities. These systems reinforce one another, producing a cycle in which communities are simultaneously over-surveilled, over-exposed to harm, and under-protected.

A dignity-centered approach requires California to redefine safety as stability, well-being, health, and autonomy, rather than the expansion of enforcement systems. This requires limiting harmful practices, strengthening accountability, and investing in community-based approaches that prevent harm before it occurs.

This section advances a framework to shift California from a model of control and punishment to one of protection, accountability, environmental justice, and community safety.

### PROPOSAL 1 – California AI, Data Justice, & Community Protection Act

California can lead the nation by establishing a comprehensive digital civil rights and technology governance framework that ensures data and emerging technologies are used to serve the public, not to surveil, target, or exclude communities. This proposal positions California as a national leader in regulating artificial intelligence, protecting privacy, and addressing the environmental impacts of digital infrastructure.

- ▶ Prohibit algorithmic discrimination across critical sectors such as employment, housing, credit, healthcare, education, and public services. Mandate enforceable auditing and transparency requirements, allocate sufficient resources for civil enforcement by the Attorney General, and regulate data brokers and corporate data practices by requiring explicit consent, transparency, and accountability. Enact satisfactory penalties for data misuse to further safeguard the rights of residents, ensuring equitable treatment and protection from discriminatory practices. Create a statewide Digital Civil Rights Enforcement Unit within the Attorney General's office with clear authority to investigate violations and enforce compliance.
- ▶ Establish strict limits on data collection, use, and sharing, including prohibitions on the transfer of sensitive personal data to federal enforcement without constitutional protections, including due process. Require algorithmic impact assessments and independent oversight for high-risk AI systems used by public agencies and all state-government contractors.



- ▶ Establish comprehensive environmental standards for data centers and AI infrastructure that encompass energy efficiency, water usage limits, emissions, and cumulative community impact assessments. Additionally, prohibit the siting of high-impact digital infrastructure in overburdened communities without meaningful mitigation, community consent, and enforceable safeguards to protect the health and well-being of residents, while ensuring equitable development practices.

## PROPOSAL 2 – Community Safety & Decriminalization Framework

Through coordinated state action, California can adopt a comprehensive public safety framework that reduces reliance on incarceration and enforcement, including harms driven by both the criminal and immigration legal systems, while expanding community-based approaches that address the root causes of harm. This approach prioritizes prevention, rehabilitation, public health, and long-term stability over punishment.

- ▶ Reduce over-policing and incarceration, including reforms to sentencing, parole, and pretrial detention practices.
- ▶ Expand community-based diversion programs, including mental health, substance use, restorative justice, and violence prevention models.
- ▶ Eliminate punitive systems that criminalize poverty by ending excessive fines and fees, decriminalizing homelessness, and removing financial penalties that trap low-income communities in cycles of debt and system involvement.
- ▶ Prohibit predictive policing technologies and restrict surveillance tools such as license plate readers and facial recognition systems.
- ▶ Strengthen protections that limit state and local cooperation with federal immigration enforcement, reducing pathways into detention and deportation.
- ▶ Expand access to trauma-informed care and reentry services, including housing, employment, family support, and community reintegration.

## *III. From Participation to Power: Increasing Civic Participation & Political Voice*

### OVERVIEW

California's democracy depends on broad participation, but participation alone does not guarantee representation, influence, or equitable outcomes.

Latino and immigrant communities continue to face structural barriers to full civic power, including language access limitations, uneven access to information, underrepresentation in leadership, and persistent disinvestment in civic infrastructure. At the same time, rapidly shifting media landscapes, the spread of misinformation, and declining trust in institutions have made it more difficult for communities to access reliable information and engage meaningfully in public decision-making. Civic power also depends on cultural visibility and narrative power, including whether communities see themselves reflected in media, arts institutions, public memory, and the stories that shape policy and political life.

**CREATE SAFER COMMUNITIES THROUGH DECRIMINALIZATION**

**CALIFORNIA MUST ENHANCE PUBLIC SAFETY BY SHIFTING FROM PUNITIVE MEASURES TO COMMUNITY-CENTERED SOLUTIONS.**

These challenges are compounded by longstanding gaps in representation. Latino communities remain underrepresented across appointed and elected leadership, the judiciary, state boards and commissions, regulatory bodies, and senior decision-making roles, limiting the extent to which public systems reflect the populations they serve and respond to their needs.

A dignity-centered approach requires moving beyond access to participation and toward full civic power, where communities are not only able to engage in democracy, but to shape outcomes, influence policy, and hold institutions accountable.

This section advances a framework to expand participation, strengthen civic infrastructure, protect narrative and cultural inclusion, and ensure that California’s systems of governance reflect the diversity, priorities, and lived experiences of its residents.

## PROPOSAL 1 – Inclusive Democracy & High Opportunity Voter Accessibility Act

California should establish the High Opportunity Voter Accessibility Act, a comprehensive voting rights and civic access framework that expands access to participation, ensures that all eligible voters can fully engage in the democratic process, and safeguards free and fair elections, where voters elect their candidates of choice without discrimination, suppression, or interference based on their protected class. The U.S. Supreme Court’s 2013 decision to invalidate Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act has triggered a resurgence of voter suppression tactics, particularly affecting marginalized communities, while ongoing challenges to Section 2 threaten further protections against discrimination. Considering recent efforts by local officials to interfere with ballots and undermine electoral access, urgent action from California policymakers is essential to safeguard voting rights for “high opportunity voters.”<sup>50</sup>

In California, the racial turnout gap remains pronounced among communities of color, driven by a legacy of disenfranchisement, systemic inequities, and stubborn socio-economic barriers. While white voters consistently show higher participation rates, Latino, Black, and Asian voters continue to face structural obstacles to voting, including misinformation, language access limitations, and unsatisfactory voter information and outreach.<sup>51</sup>

To close this gap, the state should empower “high opportunity voters” by expanding access to translated ballots, guaranteeing in-language assistance, and funding sustained, culturally relevant outreach. This includes deploying state-government election canvassers and implementing year-round voter education efforts that meet communities where they are. By investing in these initiatives, California can significantly increase voter participation among populations that historically face barriers to the electoral process.

- ▶ Establish a permanent, state-funded voter engagement infrastructure within the Secretary of State’s office to support year-round non-partisan outreach, education, and participation efforts. This includes deploying paid, state-supported canvassers to engage “high opportunity voters” ahead of each election; investing in sustained, culturally competent voter education; and ensuring targeted, in-language outreach to first-time voters, limited-English proficient voters, and low-propensity voters. Require county-level coordination plans and provide grants to community-based organizations as trusted messengers to complement state-led efforts.
- ▶ Create a state-level voting rights framework for high-impact changes to elections and districting by requiring review and approval of proposed changes that materially impact the ability to freely cast a meaningful ballot and/or elect a candidate of choice. Publish impact analyses that demonstrate proposed changes will not result in disparate impact on the franchise for protected classes. Authorize the California Attorney General to enforce compliance and invalidate noncompliant changes in a timely manner.



### EXPAND ACCESS TO THE FRANCHISE

**CALIFORNIA HAS THE POWER TO LEAD THE NATION BY ENACTING THE HIGH OPPORTUNITY VOTER ACCESSIBILITY ACT, A PIVOTAL STEP TO EXPAND ACCESS TO THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS AND ENSURE ALL ELIGIBLE VOTERS CAN PARTICIPATE FULLY AND FREE FROM DISCRIMINATION OR SUPPRESSION.**

- ▶ Expand language access beyond federal standards by requiring the provision of translated ballots, voter guides, registration materials, and in-language voting support based on a novel statewide language access formula that considers a governmental interest in closing the turnout gap.

## PROPOSAL 2 – Representation, Appointments, & Leadership Equity Act

California must establish a comprehensive framework to advance equitable representation across all levels of government, ensuring that leadership reflects the state’s rich diversity and fosters public trust in institutions. In the wake of evolving legal standards around civil rights and representation, proactive measures can help safeguard against challenges to equity and inclusion in governance. Research has shown that diverse leadership enhances public trust and improves policy outcomes, and that greater representation of historically excluded groups can lead to policies that better address their unique challenges and needs.<sup>52</sup> When citizens see themselves represented, they are more likely to engage with and support governmental initiatives, leading to stronger civic engagement and participation.

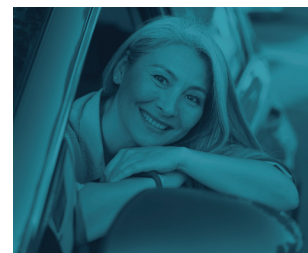
By investing in the next generation of leaders today, California can effectively transition Gen Z into mission-critical positions of influence, addressing the looming baby boomer retirement gap from public sector employment and key commissions, while maintaining government continuity. This approach not only cultivates a more engaged and capable workforce but also fosters a stable and resilient governance framework for the state’s future. By prioritizing diversity, equity, and inclusion in recruitment, selection, retention, and accountability, California can create a governance structure that effectively serves its diverse population.

- ▶ Implement mandates for state agencies, boards, commissions, regulatory bodies, and the judiciary to set explicit equity goals for appointments—coupled with transparency requirements for reporting outcomes—irrespective of appointing authority. This will allow for measurable progress toward inclusive representation and enable communities to hold decision-makers accountable.
- ▶ Establish targeted initiatives to expand Latino and underrepresented communities’ representation in decision-making roles at all government levels, including local and municipal governments and special districts. This could involve providing financial and care-taking assistance for low- and moderate-income appointees, allowing hybrid and digital participation options to account for transportation and geographic barriers, and creating pathways for young people and individuals adjusting their status to participate in governance.
- ▶ Develop paid internship and fellowship opportunities within government agencies and civic organizations specifically designed for underrepresented youth, including low-income, foster-youth, and those residing in high-poverty neighborhoods, offering hands-on experience in policymaking and governance. Implement a California-focused loan repayment program to support residents from diverse backgrounds pursuing degrees in public administration, public policy, public health, urban planning, social work, or related fields, reinforcing a pipeline for future government workers.
- ▶ Promote initiatives across all 58 counties through funding from the Secretary of State that encourage active participation by young Californians and limited English proficient residents in effective governance, such as community forums, town halls, and workshops that inform individuals about their rights and opportunities to engage in decision-making.

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### PEOPLE ARE POLICY

**IN THE FACE OF A LOOMING RETIREMENT SURGE, CALIFORNIA MUST TRANSITION GEN Z INTO MISSION-CRITICAL POSITIONS BY PRIORITIZING DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION AND ACCOUNTABILITY TO BOLSTER A FUTURE-READY GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE THAT WORKS FOR ALL REGIONS.**



### PROPOSAL 3 – Civic Infrastructure, Media, Arts, & Narrative Equity Fund

A healthy democracy depends not only on formal participation but on whether communities can see themselves reflected in public discourse, cultural institutions, and the stories that shape policy and belonging.

California should invest in a robust civic and cultural infrastructure that ensures communities have access to the information, institutions, and platforms necessary to engage in public life, preserve community histories, and shape public narratives. Cultural organizations and ethnic media serve as vital conduits for information, fostering community cohesion and resilience. They empower marginalized populations by providing platforms for authentic storytelling and representation, which are essential in shaping public discourse and influencing policy. Research has shown that communities with strong cultural institutions exhibit higher levels of civic participation and trust in democratic processes.<sup>53</sup> California should lead the nation in cultivating an informed and engaged citizenry by investing in community-based cultural organizations, ethnic media, artists, and narrative change efforts, recognizing their critical role in amplifying diverse voices and promoting belonging.

- ▶ Invest in independent and community-based media outlets, including ethnic media and neighborhood newsrooms, to expand access to trusted, culturally relevant information for all Californians.
- ▶ Support efforts to combat misinformation and disinformation, particularly in multilingual and historically underserved communities through information audits and state agency guidance to all state contractors and across all 58 counties.
- ▶ Invest in arts, culture, and storytelling institutions that preserve community histories, expand representation, and strengthen public understanding of Latino and immigrant experiences.
- ▶ Protect inclusive educational, cultural, and historical materials from censorship, erasure, and political interference.
- ▶ Expand access to civic education and leadership development programs, particularly for youth and emerging leaders.
- ▶ Establish a framework and funding for community colleges and county departments of education to monitor and evaluate the impact of investments in cultural organizations and ethnic media on civic engagement, community cohesion, and democratic participation.

#### **STRENGTHEN CALIFORNIA'S CIVIC AND CULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE**

**A HEALTHY DEMOCRACY THRIVES ON NOT JUST PARTICIPATION BUT ALSO ON COMMUNITIES SEEING THEMSELVES REFLECTED IN PUBLIC DISCOURSE AND CULTURAL NARRATIVES, REQUIRING CALIFORNIA TO MAKE BOLD INVESTMENTS IN ARTS, CULTURE, CIVIC AND STORYTELLING INSTITUTIONS.**

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## *Conclusion: From Vision to Action*

**T**he Health, Wealth, and Dignity Agenda is both a vision and a call to action. It reflects the collective leadership, lived experience, and policy expertise of the Ad Hoc Latino Leaders Group—and the understanding that California’s future will be determined by whether it invests in the people who power its economy and sustain its communities. At this pivotal moment, the state has a choice: continue to manage inequality at the margins or pursue a bold path that expands opportunity, strengthens systems, and ensures that prosperity is broadly shared.

This Agenda offers a roadmap for governing in a time of complexity and change. It calls on the next Governor, policymakers, and institutional leaders to move beyond incrementalism and to embrace a governing approach that is coordinated, equity-driven, and grounded in the realities of working families. By advancing health as a right, building pathways to economic mobility and ownership, and embedding dignity as a governing standard, California can lead the nation in demonstrating what inclusive, future-facing policy looks like in practice.

Realizing this vision will require sustained leadership, cross-sector collaboration, and accountability. The Ad Hoc Latino Leaders Group stands ready to partner with public, private, and community leaders to advance this work—through policy development, narrative alignment, and civic engagement. Together, we can move California toward a future where all communities not only endure, but thrive—with health, wealth, and dignity at the center of what is possible in the second quarter of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.



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## Contributors

The **Ad Hoc Latino Leaders Group** is a statewide, cross-sector coalition of Latino leaders working together since 2018 to shape California’s policy, leadership, and governance priorities. Formed to address urgent challenges facing Latino communities, the Ad Hoc Group coordinates leadership during pivotal political moments and advances policy solutions grounded in lived experience, data, and a shared commitment to expanding opportunity, representation, and equity across the state.

The 2026 Agenda reflects a collective, cross-sector vision to shape the policies, investments and institutions that define California’s future. Four community-based organizations served as facilitators of an inclusive working group process: Latinos for a Healthy California (Health), Hispanas Organized for Political Equality (Wealth), the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights, and the Hispanic Federation (Dignity). From January to March 2026, these organizations convened contributors in a process designed to elevate community priorities, lived experiences, and bold policy ideas—ensuring the Agenda was community-driven and not reflective of any one entity’s policy platform. The 2026 Agenda is designed to inform dialogue, guide investment, and support leadership across sectors—reflecting shared priorities and ambition, while recognizing that no single organization endorses every proposal in full.

Over four dozen leaders contributed to shaping the Agenda, representing diverse geographies across California, a wide range of sectors, multiple generations, and deep expertise across policy issues—ensuring the final product reflects the breadth, complexity, and lived experiences of Latino communities statewide.

Orson Aguilar	Rudy Espinoza	Pedro Ramirez
Liliana Alonso Maya	Dr. Hector Flores	Dr. Jeffrey Reynoso
Mayra Alvarez	Dr. Wilma Franco	Daniela Rodriguez
Andrea Amavisca	George Galvis	Dr. Yammilette Rodriguez
Leticia Andueza	Lili Gangas	Angelica Salas
Dr. Seciah Aquino	Eduardo Garcia	Francisco Silva
Vanessa Aramayo	Jane Garcia	Michele Siqueiros
Christian Arana	Sergio Garcia	Helen Torres
Patty Barahona	Jessica J. González	Max Vargas
Diego Cartagena	Karla Guerra	Sbeydeh Viveros-Walton
German Cash	Chris Iglesias	Jeannette Zanipatin
Carmela Castellano Garcia	Lisette Islas	
Brenda Castillo	Noerena Limón	
Erika Cervantes	Esmeralda Lopez	
Gabriela Chavez-Lopez	Arnulfo Manriquez	
Joselen Contreras	Rita Medina	
Maribel Cruz	Michael Mendoza	
Sonja Diaz	Cristian Mora	
Audrey Dow	Berenice Núñez Constant	
Maria Echaveste	Karely Ordaz Salto	
Andrea Escobar	Iliana Perez	
Lizette Escobedo	Jose Luis Plaza	

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