

**Latinx Excellence on the Hill
October 2, 2018**

Honorees

William Castro

Merrimack Valley

William was a leader in the Hurricane Maria relief efforts as he worked tirelessly to mobilize his city and engage volunteers to gather and prepare donations for shipment to Puerto Rico. As a token of his dedication, William took 4 weeks of his hard-earned vacation time from his job to commit to this cause and ensure all donations were properly labeled, packed, and delivered to those in Puerto Rico who needed it most.

Nominating Legislator

Representative Frank A. Moran
Chair, Massachusetts Black and Latino Legislative Caucus
17th Essex District

Dr. F. Javier Cevallos

Framingham

Dr. Cevallos was born in Ecuador and later immigrated to the United States. He was a full professor at UMass Amherst before becoming President of Framingham State University (FSU) on July 1, 2014. He has been instrumental in strengthening the academic programs at FSU and has worked closely with Massachusetts Bay Community College and the Framingham Public Schools to enhance educational opportunities in MetroWest. Dr. Cevallos continues to be a leader in the MetroWest community by serving on numerous non-profit boards including the AASCU, NCAA Division III President's Council, United Way of Tri-County, Jewish Family Service, and the MetroWest Chamber of Commerce. He is also a member of the Framingham Rotary Club.

Nominating Legislator

Representative Carmine Gentile
13th Middlesex District

Dr. Sylvia R. Chiang-Raposo

Revere

Sylvia Chiang-Raposo, MD, MPH, is the Director of the Revere CARES Coalition and a longtime advocate of clinical and community based health. Dr. Chiang-Raposo is a former medical general practitioner in her native country of Honduras and joined Revere CARES in 2007 as the first Food and Fitness Manager of what is known today as the Revere on the Move (ROTM) initiative. She has also served as the Coalition's Assistant Director, working closely with city leadership to enhance food, transportation, and activities focused on making Revere healthier.

Nominating Legislator

Representative Robert DeLeo
Speaker of the House of Representatives
19th Suffolk District

Fermin De La Cruz

Haverhill

Fermin de la Cruz is the co-leader of the Haverhill chapter of the Merrimack Valley Project, a regional social justice organization fighting for immigrant rights by hosting a series of meetings and actions designed to give a voice to a traditionally marginalized population. In June of 2017, he co-led a Haverhill community meeting attended by over 250 immigrants and allies. The event compelled local politicians to publicly address the fear and anxiety of the immigrant community for the first time since the 2016 Presidential Election. The Merrimack Valley Project continues to fight for immigrant rights by providing transportation and accompaniment to a number of immigrants throughout the greater Haverhill region.

Nominating Legislator

Representative Andres Vargas
3rd Essex District
Member, Massachusetts Black and Latino Legislative Caucus

Ben Echevarria

Somerville

Ben Echevarria is the Executive Director of The Welcome Project, an organization dedicated to building the collective power of immigrants to shape community decisions. A pastor and a longtime leader in the Latino community, Ben's work in the social justice movement has led him to organizing and advocating for those whose voices aren't being heard. Ben now leads fights for affordable housing, equitable educational policies, and leadership development. Ben serves as a

Boston Neighborhood Fellow for The Boston Foundation, the Massachusetts Latino Democratic Caucus, and Community Works. Ben's leadership on equity and equality has earned him the recognition of the State House of Representatives. He was also named one of Somerville's Top 40 Leaders by Scout Magazine, and included as one of the "100 Most Influential People on the Latino Community" by La Planeta Newspaper.

Nominating Legislator

Representative Mike Connolly
26th Middlesex District

Nedinia (Neddy) Latimer

Leominster

Neddy Latimer is the Executive Director of the Spanish American Center (SAC) and has been a leader in the Leominster community for decades. Through a recent expansion of SAC's nutritional program and an addition to the on-site food pantry, SAC provides meals and social activities to low-income children in Leominster, Fitchburg, and Gardner during summer vacation. Under Neddy's leadership, SAC also provides bilingual domestic violence counseling, ESL language programs, health screenings, afterschool programs, and street outreach. Many of these initiatives are accomplished with low financial resources. Neddy's dedication to improving the quality of life for the Latinx community in Leominster and throughout North Central Massachusetts is unyielding, and she continues to serve as a mentor for so many in the community.

(continued on next page)

Nominating Legislator

Representative Natalie Higgins
4th Worcester District

Officer Ydritzabel (Angie) Oller

Jamaica Plain

Officer Oller has made a number of far reaching contributions to improving the safety of and fostering positive relationships with the Jamaica Plain and Boston community. Office Oller has been a facilitator of the Healthy Families initiative, Zumba with a Cop program, E-13 Halloween Block Party, and played a leadership role in the Junior Police Academy and National Night Out.

Nominating Legislator

Representative Jeffrey Sánchez
Chairman, House Committee on Ways and Means
15th Suffolk District
Member, Massachusetts Black and Latino Legislative Caucus

Orlando Perilla-Arias

Harbor Point on the Bay, Boston

Active duty military, USAF; community leader and advocate in the "Harbor Point on the Bay," former Columbia Point neighborhood of Dorchester and Chair&CEO of the Harbor Point Community Task Force, Inc., a resident board that represents the 3,200 residents of Harbor Point. Orlando helped reduce crime and violence in his community over the years throughout his many leadership roles in Harbor Point, Dorchester.

Nominating Legislator

Senator Nick Collins

1st Suffolk District

Officer Wanessa Pizaia and Officer Jian Barcelo

Barnstable

Emigrating from Brazil, Officer Pizaia and Officer Barcelo are the first naturalized citizens to serve as Barnstable Police Officers. Barnstable has a large Brazilian population and thus, the officers are helping to create a link between the Brazilian community and the police department. Additionally, their presence on the police force gives children in the community someone to look up to as a role model.

Nominating Legislator

Representative Will Crocker

2nd Barnstable District

Israel Rivera

Holyoke

Israel Rivera is the Community Engagement Director at OneHolyoke CDC, a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving housing for low and middle-income residents of Holyoke. He is active with the Holyoke Safe & Successful Youth Initiative, an organization dedicated to serving young men aged 17-24. Mr. Rivera was a Workforce Development Specialist with the organization. This work came after Mr. Rivera had been incarcerated himself. Mr. Rivera's work and involvement within his own community has led to him being viewed as a role model to many at-risk youth in Holyoke. He is also currently working on earning his master's degree in Public Policy at UMass Amherst. On September 15, 2018, Israel married Jenny Cruz.

Nominating Legislator

Representative Aaron Vega

Treasurer, Massachusetts Black and Latino Legislative Caucus
5th Hampden District

Kim Rivera

Springfield

Kim Rivera is a Springfield native and mother of 3. She has been a volunteer, activist and political organizer for more than a decade in Springfield and greater Western Massachusetts. She has worn countless hats- working on numerous electoral campaigns, supporting non-profit organizations serving the community, and advocating for progressive change for women, minorities and families. She currently serves as the Western Massachusetts Director of Community Engagement for Massachusetts Parents United, a statewide parent advocacy organization uniting families to support safe neighborhoods, high quality education, affordable housing and food security.

Nominating Legislator

Representative Bud Williams

11th Hampden District

Member, Massachusetts Black and Latino Legislative Caucus

Jorge (Georgie) Rodriguez

Fitchburg

Mr. Rodriguez, affectionately known as “Georgie”, is a constant positive presence in the City of Fitchburg. He is a frequent attendant and volunteer at community events. Georgie often facilitates the communication between the local Hispanic community and the broader resident community and always takes initiative - evidenced by him hosting a weekly free breakfast event at his church.

Georgie is committed to social justice and has worked extensively to raise funds for local Spanish American organizations committed to supporting public schools, the well-being of the youth and seniors, the conditions of the poor, and even international peace missions. Georgie’s joyous, optimistic, and uplifting energy makes him a beloved, respected, and valued member of the community.

Nominating Legislator

Senator Dean Tran

Worcester and Middlesex District

Sylvia Ruiz

Framingham

Sylvia Ruiz is a Senior Care Products Account Executive for Fallon Health. She focuses on making a difference in the lives of low-income seniors through the “Our Youngsters of Yesterday” program, an initiative focused on helping seniors maintain their health and independence. Ms. Ruiz is also co-owner of Ruiz Transportation Services, LLC, a family owned business that provides transportation services for social events and non-emergency medical appointments.

Ms. Ruiz has been an active member of the community through service and leadership in a host of organizations. She is active in the Hispanic American Chamber of Commerce (HACC), serving as a long-time Board member and Vice Chair. She is also a Board member of the MetroWest Conference for Women, a non-profit dedicated to inspiring, connecting, and motivating women through every stage of life. Currently, she is the President of Conexión Latinoamericana, which has brought two successful Hispanic-American Festivals to Framingham. Through her service on the Board of Thirst Responder, she was instrumental in the relief efforts following Hurricanes Irma and Maria by delivering water and personal messages of hope and encouragement directly from school children in Framingham. Ms. Ruiz’s work as an independent health insurance broker for small businesses earned her the “2017 Woman Making History NOW” Award.

Nominating Legislator

Senator Karen Spilka

Senate President

Second Middlesex and Norfolk District

Margareth Basilio Shepard

Framingham

Margareth has been a community organizer in Framingham for decades, with a particular focus on immigrant rights. She was one of the leaders of a statewide campaign to make drivers licenses available

(continued on next page)

to immigrants in the state. Since then, she has been very active in the community and has served as a Town Meeting member in Framingham, the Treasurer to the Framingham Democratic Town Committee, and the Secretary on the Board of the Brazilian American Center (BRACE).

During the 2016 election cycle, she co-founded an organization called Brazilians for Hillary, which later became Brazilians for Political Education, an organization focused on increasing political engagement within the Brazilian community. At the end of last year, Margareth was

elected to the inaugural class of city councilors in Framingham, becoming the first Brazilian immigrant to be elected to a city council in the country.

Nominating Legislator

Representative Jack Patrick Lewis
7th Middlesex District
