

2023 Public Policy Platform: Florida

HISPANIC UNITY OF FLORIDA



Empowering a
New Generation
of Americans

HEALTH - ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT - EDUCATION

2023 Public Policy Platform

Hispanic Unity of Florida's (HUF) Vision is that everyone be empowered to live their American Dream and its Mission is empowering immigrants and others to become self-sufficient, productive and civically engaged.

But our Vision and Mission will never be fulfilled without all of our families having equal access to the tools and benefits they are rightfully entitled to.

HUF's 2023 Public Policy Agenda seeks to highlight the multi-generational issues our community is facing and how these issues are barriers to reaching our full potential, as individuals and as a community.

Hispanic Unity of Florida and the Urban League of Broward County partnered with Florida International University's Metropolitan Center to produce two comprehensive reports: [The State of Black Broward](#) and [The State of Hispanic and Immigrant Broward](#).

These studies provide a comprehensive, holistic analysis of key population, economic, and social trends, factors, and conditions that allow for an informed discussion on racial and ethnic equity and disparity issues facing Broward County and its municipalities.

HUF has used the findings of these studies to explain why these issues are being highlighted in this Policy Agenda and the importance of addressing such issues.

Our organization focuses on the areas of Economic Development, Education, and Healthcare. These areas mirror the Programs at HUF that provide direct service assistance to our community.

Our hope is that collectively, we – families, business, government, faith, and community groups – can truly advocate for game-changing policies that address social and economic barriers impacting our children and adults.

Economic Development

Strong, equitable, inclusive economies deliver broad-based prosperity to their residents by providing:

-Stable Long-Term Growth — job and employment growth that is less susceptible to wide and/or rapid declines, so that household wealth and income is protected during national economic downturns and shocks as recently experienced with the COVID-19 pandemic and prior “Great Recession.”

-Economic Opportunity in the form of a variety of jobs and occupations paying competitive wages and incomes that increase rapidly with improved skills and experience.

-Economic Mobility — regardless of where one starts on the economic ladder, individuals and families can improve their economic conditions and build wealth.

-Economic Equity — growth whose benefits are shared by residents across the income spectrum and where they live.

Key HUF 2023 Legislative Priority

- **Support two-generational approach to provide multi-generational support for families.** HUF’s innovative 2Gen model provides a framework of tools, resources and integrated services that builds family well-being and maximizes the potential that lies within each child and the adults in their lives so that families and communities thrive.

We seek to develop more effective policies for families with young children in poverty by aligning targeted social services that support child development with workforce development services to increase family economic self-sufficiency.

Recommendations:

- Support career training, skill building, and apprenticeship programs that support low-income families in developing necessary skills to attain high-wage jobs.
 - Take into account the impact of Florida’s new minimum wage law on social service program participants by continuing to model “fiscal cliffs” accounting for minimum wage increases in accordance with the constitutionally mandated timeline.
- **Support Affordable Housing.** Equitable housing incorporates the values of inclusion, equal access to opportunity, and diversity in communities ensuring that all people – regardless of race, ethnicity, family status or disability – have a range of choices for where to live now and in the future.

According to the 2018 Broward County Affordable Housing Needs Assessment, the housing affordability demands in Broward County and its municipalities did not improve despite impressive post-recession job growth numbers and low unemployment. **The study found 53.9 percent of Broward County households are cost-burdened making Broward County one of the most unaffordable places to live in the U.S.**

The significant growth of severely cost-burdened renters is most pressing problem due to three market conditions: 1) the increasing demand for renter housing throughout the City resulting in low vacancy rates and a spiraling increase in rent prices, 2) the lack of affordable rental housing production, and 3) rent prices are increasing faster than wages.

Education

According to the National Equity Project, educational equity means that “each child receives what they need to develop to their full academic and social potential.” Equity in education is the process of reforming practices, policies, and procedures at the school and district levels to support academic fairness and inclusion and ensure that every child has the resources, teachers, interventions, and supports they need to be successful.

Significant disparities exist in Broward County’s education attainment based on race and ethnicity. Only 31.3 percent of Hispanic or Latino residents and 21.5 percent of Broward County’s Black or African American residents 25+ years of age have a bachelor’s degree or higher compared to 40.2 percent of Whites.

Key HUF 2023 Legislative Priority

- **Prioritize early childhood education.** The Office of Early Learning (OEL) must engage with early learning stakeholders across the state to determine the plan they will submit to the Legislature and the Administration for Children and Families for use of these funds.

Recommendation:

- Support boosting funding for both School Readiness and the Voluntary Pre-K program to better serve more families and buoy childcare operators.
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- **State financial aid for college students who are undocumented.** Support opening eligibility to both merit- and need-based financial aid and in-state tuition to all undocumented students who are currently eligible for in-state tuition, including DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) and Temporary Protected Status (TPS) recipients, at both the undergraduate and graduate level.

Health

Equitable Health Care means that all individuals have access to affordable, high quality, culturally, and linguistically appropriate care in a timely manner. This includes health care quality, patient education and empowerment, health care infrastructure, health care policy, and program administration.

Key HUF 2023 Legislative Priority

- **Close the access gap to affordable healthcare, with a focus on vulnerable low-income populations.** Currently, 1.1 million Floridians do not qualify for any healthcare coverage. Many families are priced out of healthcare options and are forced to rely on hospital system's emergency rooms, a costly option for both consumers and providers. Solutions must be found that would prove beneficial not just for immigrant families, but for all Floridians.

Recommendations:

- Florida should expand Medicaid, as per the Affordable Care Act, to low-income adults under 138% of the Federal Poverty Line.
- Incorporate Affordable Care Act consumer protections into state law, including protecting Floridians with pre-existing conditions from future price shocks.
- Support the elimination of the five-year waiting period for pregnant women to access Medicaid via the Immigrant Children's Health Improvement Act (ICHIA).
- Support the elimination of the five-year residency in Florida rule for Legal Permanent Residents to access Medicaid.

Key HUF 2023 Legislative Priority

- **Remove barriers to KidCare (CHIP) enrollment.** An estimated 343,000 children are eligible but not enrolled.

Recommendations:

- Increase income eligibility for KidCare premium subsidies so more families may have access to KidCare. Currently, families with income above 215% of the poverty level (\$47,214 for a household of 3) are ineligible. Most states have a higher income eligibility limit with a median level of 255% of the poverty level (\$55,998 for a three-person household).
- Remove barriers to enrollment: Prohibit "lock out" of households from KidCare if a payment is missed.

- **Culturally Appropriate Mental Health Counseling.** HUF's Healing & Empowering All Living with Trauma (HEAL) Program connects community members who lack access to mental health services because of misinformation, language, and stigma to resources to help them heal from trauma.

Recommendation:

- Support this Program at HUF to increase mental health services through provider training and outreach to underserved populations.