



LATIN AMERICAN ADVISORY GROUP

Isiah Leggett
County Executive

Timothy L. Firestine
Chief Administrative Officer

January 10, 2014

Honorable Isiah Leggett
Montgomery County Executive
101 Monroe Street
Rockville, MD 20850

Dear Mr. Leggett:

On behalf of the Montgomery County Latin American Advisory Group (LAAG), we thank you for your continuing support of the Latino community in Montgomery County. This letter contains the budget priorities expressed by the LAAG members related to the needs and concerns of the Latino community in the County, particularly in the areas of small business development, housing, health and social services, programs for disadvantaged youth, and Latino employee representation in County government. Priority areas that require your immediate attention include:

Provide support for business development services to Latino businesses. We urge you to increase County resources to community-based organizations serving Latino small business owners in the County, including the Latino Economic Development Center and the Women Business Center. Between 2002 and 2007, the number of Latino-owned small businesses in Montgomery County grew from 7,405 to 11,550.¹ Many Latinos, particularly immigrants, live outside the mainstream financial system and, therefore, it is more difficult for those who are unable to obtain banking services to access the capital and technical assistance necessary to establish and sustain a business.

We recognize the imminent closure or reduction of County-run small business incubators and recommend partnerships with minority business associations to restructure and continue support of minority-owned small business incubators. Small business outreach and sustainability support programs that provide hands-on technical assistance, business growth coaching, and access to affordable business space are essential to minority-owned companies that are creating jobs in the County. Considering that Latino owned businesses represent 10% of all businesses, investing in programs that support and nourish these businesses will result in a positive multiplier effect on the economy of the County.

¹ From the 2007 Economic Census Survey of Business Owners. (Next census data will be available in 2015)