



EL MOMENTO ES NUESTRO RISE, BUILD, REIMAGINE



2025 PUERTO RICO CONFERENCE - NOVEMBER 6TH, 2025

SESSION 1: 9:00AM - 10:15AM

SESSION 3: 1:45PM - 3:00PM

SESSION 2: 10:30AM - 11:45AM

SESSION 4: 3:15PM - 4:30PM



HON. KARINES REYES, RN

CHAIR OF THE NYS SENATE & ASSEMBLY PR/HISPANIC TASK FORCE

HON. ANDREA STEWART-COUSINS

NYS SENATE PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE & MAJORITY LEADER

HON. CARL E. HEASTIE

NYS ASSEMBLY SPEAKER





HON. CARL E. HEASTIE
ASSEMBLY SPEAKER

**HON. ANDREA
STEWART - COUSINS**
SENATE MAJORITY LEADER
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

**NYS ASSEMBLY & SENATE
PUERTO RICAN/HISPANIC
TASK FORCE**



HON. KARINES REYES
CHAIRWOMAN

Dear Conference Participants,

On behalf of myself and a historic 30 Executive Membership of the NYS Puerto Rican/Hispanic Task Force, we welcome and thank you for being part of this year's SOMOS Puerto Rico Legislative Workshops!

This year we had over 200 panel proposals submitted by advocates, elected officials, and community partners from across the state. Thanks to this incredible response, we've curated a record-breaking schedule with 68 panels that promises to be an extraordinary gathering of leaders, advocates, and change-makers committed to the advancement of Latinos in New York and Puerto Rico.

Our conference theme, "El Momento Es Nuestro: Rise, Build, Reimagine," captures the spirit of what is bringing us together. We are gathering at a time of tremendous possibility, when Latino communities are simultaneously under attack and driving change across every sector of society. This conference is more than meeting in the island — it is a space to strengthen our collective power, shape policy, and chart a future against all odds.

¡Pa'Lante Siempre!

Karines Reyes, R.N.
Member of Assembly – District 87
Chair – NYS Puerto Rican / Hispanic Task Force





HON. CARL E. HEASTIE
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PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

NYS ASSEMBLY & SENATE
PUERTO RICAN/HISPANIC
TASK FORCE



HON. KARINES REYES
CHAIRWOMAN

Estimados participantes:

En nombre mío y de los 30 miembros ejecutivos del Grupo de Trabajo Puertorriqueño/Hispano del Estado de Nueva York, les damos la bienvenida y les agradecemos su participación en los Talleres Legislativos SOMOS Puerto Rico de este año.

Este año, recibimos más de 200 propuestas de talleres presentadas por defensores, funcionarios electos y socios comunitarios de todo el estado. Gracias a esta increíble respuesta, hemos creado un programa histórico con 68 paneles que promete ser una reunión extraordinaria de líderes, defensores y creadores de cambios comprometidos con el progreso de los latinos en Nueva York y Puerto Rico.

El tema de nuestra conferencia, "El Momento Es Nuestro: Levantarse, Construir, Reimaginar", captura el espíritu de lo que nos une. Nos reunimos en un momento de enormes posibilidades, cuando las comunidades latinas se encuentran bajo ataque e impulsando el cambio en todos los sectores de la sociedad. Esta conferencia es más que una reunión en la isla: es un espacio para fortalecer nuestro poder colectivo, definir políticas y forjar un futuro contra viento y marea.

¡Pa'Lante Siempre!

Karines Reyes, R.N.
Member of Assembly – District 87
Chair – NYS Puerto Rican / Hispanic Task Force



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Executive Director

Kels (Kelvin O. Howell Jr.)
Deputy Executive Director

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Dear Friends, Sponsors, and Supporters,

On behalf of the Somos Inc. Board of Directors, our Executive Director, Rosa M. Pelton Alcantara, and Deputy Executive Director, Kelvin Howell Jr. (Kels), we are honored to once again join in collaboration with the New York State Assembly and Senate Puerto Rican/Hispanic Task Force for this year's conference.

For nearly four decades, Somos Inc. has stood as a bridge between community, leadership, and advocacy. Each year, through our Conference and Legislative Workshops, we bring together elected officials, community leaders, professionals, and students to engage in meaningful dialogue and develop solutions that directly impact the Hispanic community — not only across New York State but throughout the diaspora.

We extend our deepest gratitude to our sponsors, partners, and participants whose unwavering support continues to make this important work possible. Your dedication over the past 39 years has empowered us to grow, evolve, and remain steadfast in our mission.

This year's conference represents more than just a gathering — it is a celebration of progress, collaboration, and unity. It is an opportunity to listen, learn, and lead together as we address the challenges that shape our present and define our future.

We encourage every participant to attend, engage, and contribute to the rich discussions and initiatives that make SOMOS such a vital platform for positive change. Your voice and participation are the driving force behind our continued success.

Thank you for being an integral part of the SOMOS family and for believing in our mission. Together, we will continue to build a stronger, more inclusive future for generations to come.

Somos Inc. Chairman

Hon. Francisco Diaz

Executive Director

Rosa M Pelton Alcantara

Rosa M Pelton Alcantara

SESSION 1: 9:00AM - 10:15AM

Flamingo A (2nd Floor)	Time to Act: How to Disentangle NY from Trump's Anti-Immigrant Agenda <i>Assemblymember Marcela Mitaynes</i>	Conf. Room 5 (2nd Floor)	Rebuilding for Resilience: Sustainable Infrastructure and Energy in Puerto Rico and New York <i>Councilmember Carmen De La Rosa</i>
Flamingo B (2nd Floor)	Protecting Family Bonds: Preventing and Mitigating Family Separation in New York State's Criminal Legal Systems <i>Senator Julia Salazar, Assemblymember Phara Souffrant-Forrest and Assemblymember Anna Kelles</i>	Conf. Room 6 (2nd Floor)	Tackling Health Equity in Healthcare Facilities and in Home Health Care: Exploring Ways to Address the Nursing Workforce Shortage <i>Assemblymember Alicia Hyndman</i>
Flamingo C (2nd Floor)	Defending Progress and Reimagining Equity: How New York and Puerto Rico Are Advancing DEIA Amid National Shifts <i>Senator Nathalia Fernandez and Assemblymember Jessica González-Rojas</i>	Conf. Room 7 (2nd Floor)	Planning with Purpose: Building a Resilient Future Through Clean Energy and Skilled Jobs <i>Assemblymember Emérita Torres</i>
Flamingo D (2nd Floor)	Unlocking the Power of MWBEs: Building Wealth in Black and Brown Communities <i>Assemblymember Amanda Septimo</i>	Conf. Room 8 (2nd Floor)	AI for All <i>Senator Kristen Gonzalez</i>
Tropical A (2nd Floor)	Bridging Equity: Re-Connecting Education, Health & Community <i>Senator Shelley B. Mayer and Assemblymember Nader Sayegh</i>	Conf. Room 9 (2nd Floor)	From Content to Change: Educating and Mobilizing Young People and Marginalized Communities in our Evolving Media Landscape <i>Senator Kristen Gonzalez, Assemblymember Maritza Davila, Assemblymember Harvey Epstein, Assemblymember Khaleel Anderson, Senator Robert Jackson</i>
Tropical B (2nd Floor)	Cultivating Calm, and Connection: Students, Families and Educators <i>Assemblymember Karines Reyes</i>	Conf. Room 10 (2nd Floor)	SRJ in New York State and the Caribbean: Reclaiming Health, Power, and Resilience through Research and Policy <i>Assemblymember Manny De Los Santos and Assemblymember Bichotte Hermelyn</i>
Tropical C (2nd Floor)	The Moment is Ours: Building the Future for the Next Era of Justice From the Inside Out <i>Assemblymember Catalina Cruz, Assemblymember Eddie Gibbs and Senator Cooney</i>	Salon Del Mar A (2nd Floor)	Reclaiming Power: Civic Engagement as Resistance in the Face of Authoritarianism <i>Assemblymember Yudelka Tapia and Assemblymember Dana Levenberg</i>
Conf. Room 3 (2nd Floor)	The Myth of 'Tough-on-Crime' Latino Voters: How to win on safety with Latino voters <i>Assemblymember Marcela Mitaynes and Assemblymember Catalina Cruz</i>	Salon Del Mar B (2nd Floor)	From NYC to Puerto Rico: Place-Based Strategies for Economic Development Through Culture and Tourism <i>Assemblymember Steven Raga</i>
Conf. Room 4 (2nd Floor)	Federal Fault Lines, Community Front Lines: Securing New York and Puerto Rico's Workforce Futures <i>Assemblymember George Alvarez, Assemblymember Larinda Hooks, and Assemblymember Tony Simone</i>	Garden Wing Auditorium (1st Floor)	CLE COURSE (The Independence of the Judiciary and the Rule of Law)

SESSION I: 9:00AM – 10:15AM

**Marcela Mitaynes**

Assemblymember

*9:00am - 10:15am | Flamingo A - 2nd Floor****Time to Act: How to Disentangle NY from Trump's Anti-Immigrant Agenda***

New York is at a critical crossroads. Despite its reputation as a progressive state, New York continues to enable ICE through jail transfers, data sharing, and cooperation with local law enforcement—actions that endanger immigrant communities, erode trust in public institutions, and threaten our economic stability. This panel will spotlight how the New York for All Act, and other state and local disentanglement efforts in New York, will prevent real-world harms.

Panelists: Rosa Cohen-Cruz, Director of Immigration Policy, The Bronx Defenders; Linda Flor Brito, Senior Policy and Campaigns Organizer, Immigrant Defense Project; Labor Representative, 32BJ; Bryan MacCormack, Co-Executive Director, Columbia County Sanctuary Movement; Natalia Aristizabal, Deputy Director, Make The Road New York; Shahana Hanif, New York City Councilmember, District 39; Murad Awawdeh, President and CEO, New York Immigration Coalition; Yasmine Farhang, Executive Director, Immigrant Defense Project

**Julia Salazar**

Senator

**Phara Souffrant-Forrest**

Assemblymember

*9:00am - 10:15am | Flamingo B - 2nd Floor****Protecting Family Bonds: Preventing and Mitigating Family Separation in New York State's Criminal Legal Systems***

This panel will explore the dire and sometimes unintended consequences of family separation due to orders of protection and incarceration in New York State, and examine legislative solutions to remedy this and protect family bonds. Panelists will examine how legal tools, and policies and practices claiming to protect can instead inflict harm, including de facto evictions, disrupted caregiving, trauma to children, lost employment, and increased exposure to both the criminal legal system and immigration enforcement. We will highlight the racialized and gendered nature of these harms and call for a reimagining of justice that prioritizes due process and family stability.

Panelists: Eli Northrup, BxD Criminal Defense Policy Director; Shamika Crawford, Former BxD client; Serena Martin, Executive Director, New Hour for Women & Children Long Island; Wendell Walters, Chief Housing Officer, Osborne Association

**Anna Kelles**

Assemblymember

SESSION I: 9:00AM – 10:15AM



**Nathalia
Fernandez**

Senator



**Jessica
González-Rojas**

Assemblymember

9:00am - 10:15am | Flamingo C - 2nd Floor

Defending Progress and Reimagining Equity: How New York and Puerto Rico Are Advancing DEIA Amid National Shifts

Across the country, the core values of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) are being challenged in ways that directly threaten the progress made by historically excluded communities – including Black, Latino, Indigenous, Asian, LGBTQIA+, immigrant, disability, and faith-based communities. This session begins by honoring the shared history and resilience of our communities – from the island to the diaspora – and the generations of struggle that have brought us to this moment. The panel will feature leaders across government, business, and advocacy, working to uphold and evolve DEIA in New York and Puerto Rico. Participants will learn how intersectional strategies – such as initiatives that begin with immigrant communities in mind but also serve people with disabilities – create more sustainable, far-reaching impacts.

Panelists: Charlotte Gossett Navarro, Puerto Rico Chief Director, Hispanic Federation; Crystal Rodriguez-Dabney, SVP & Associate Counsel / Chief Employee Advocacy & Fairness Officer, Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center; Denise Miranda, Commissioner, NYS Division of Human Rights; Elizabeth Velez, President & CEO, The Velez Organization; Joseph Thomas, Assistant Counsel, Executive Chamber; Priya Nair, Executive Director, NYC Commission on Gender Equity; Julissa Gutierrez, Chief Diversity Officer, Executive Chamber; Quemuel Arroyo, Chief Accessibility Officer, MTA; Timothy Hagues, Commissioner, NYS Department of Civil Service



Amanda Septimo

Assemblymember

9:00am - 10:15am | Flamingo D - 2nd Floor

Unlocking the Power of MWBEs: Building Wealth in Black and Brown Communities

New York City has certified over 10,000 MWBEs across various industries, helping make women and minority business owners more visible and providing access to more opportunities. Despite these strides, many entrepreneurs from black and brown communities continue to face barriers related to sustaining their entrepreneurial endeavors. This panel will discuss how government, aspiring entrepreneurs, and community can come together to support MWBEs as a sustainable path to wealth building in underserved communities, with a spotlight on construction and hospitality endeavors.

Panelists: Lorraine Grillo, President, Bravo Construction; Michael Garner, Chief Diversity Officer, NYC; Louis Coletti, President of Lou Coletti Strategies; Maria Teresa Osario, Senior Director of Business Development, NYC School Construction Authority; Alfredo Anguiera, Founding Partner of Hoodspitality; Quenia Abreu, President, New York Women's Chamber of Commerce; Elizabeth Velez, President and Principal, Velez Organization

SESSION I: 9:00AM – 10:15AM

**Shelley B. Mayer**

Senator

**Nader Sayegh**

Assemblymember

*9:00am - 10:15am | Tropical A - 2nd Floor****Bridging Equity: Re-Connecting Education, Health & Community***

This workshop examines how systemic inequities in education, health, and community impact student success and overall well-being. By highlighting BLACC's educational pipeline strategy, YSEF's focus on health and equity, and Zone 126's work with Latino new arrivals, we spotlight innovative solutions that strengthen opportunities and outcomes for communities in New York and Puerto Rico, while discussing our learnings, next steps, and how to forge ahead with creative solutions.

Panelists: Jeremiah L. Grace, Interim CEO BLACC; Millie Gutierrez, Founder, YSEF; Blanca P. Lopez, Commissioner of Planning for Westchester County; Brandon Begarly, Assistant Vice President, Research Administration and Strategy Office of Research Administration, Compliance, Learning, & Enhancement, CUNY Lehman College; Jose Alvarado, Vice Chair, Westchester Country Board of Legislators

**Karines Reyes**

Assemblymember

*9:00am - 10:15am | Tropical B - 2nd Floor****Cultivating Calm, and Connection: Students, Families and Educators***

Join UFT President Michael Mulgrew and NYC Department of Education Chancellor Melissa Aviles-Ramos for an important discussion on the transformative impact of the MindUP program in New York City classrooms. This innovative program, rooted in neuroscience and mindfulness, was originally designed to help students regulate their emotions, calm their nervous systems, and foster kindness and gratitude. However, its benefits have reached far beyond the classroom—touching the lives of families and educators. Discover how taking a simple “brain break” can shift a mindset, improve well-being, and create a ripple effect of positivity in schools and communities. Learn how a groundbreaking collaboration between labor and management helped scale this initiative and why its success offers a model for future educational programs.

Panelists: Mary Vaccaro, Vice President of Education, UFT; Melissa Aviles-Ramos, Chancellor NYC Department of Education; Michael Mulgrew, UFT President; Bernadine Futrell, Managing Director MindUp Goldie Hawn Foundation

SESSION I: 9:00AM – 10:15AM

**Catalina Cruz**

Assemblymember

**Eddie Gibbs**

Assemblymember

**Jeremy Cooney**

Senator

*9:00am - 10:15am | Tropical C - 2nd Floor****The Moment is Ours: Building the Future for the Next Era of Justice From the Inside Out***

New Yorkers returning from incarceration face countless obstacles that perpetuate cycles of disadvantage: the inability to obtain basic identification documents, bureaucratic obstacles to accessing essential public benefits, and the immediate crisis of securing food and income upon release. This dynamic panel will examine a comprehensive reentry agenda built on three foundational pillars: Rise (overcoming immediate barriers), Build (establishing sustainable support systems), and Reimagine (transforming systems for lasting change).

Panelists: Andre Ward, Executive Director, John Jay College Institute for Justice and Opportunity; Reggie Chapman, Policy Director, The Fortune Society; Wendell Walters, Chief Housing Officer, Osborne Association; Yami Vazquez, Outreach Specialist, Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO)

**Marcela Mitaynes**

Assemblymember

**Catalina Cruz**

Assemblymember

*9:00am - 10:15am | Conference Room 3 - 2nd Floor****The Myth of 'Tough-on-Crime' Latino Voters: How to win on safety with Latino voters***

Since the last presidential race, safety has often been framed as a “wedge issue” for Latino voters, assumed to favor “tough-on-crime” and “tough-on-immigration” policies. In NY, research shows Latino voters prioritize safety but support punitive candidates only when no serious alternatives exist. Latino communities know the real solutions: investing in youth programs, education, jobs, and local services. This panel explores how policymakers can create a preventative, justice-focused vision of safety..

Panelists: Camille Rivera, Partner, Deal Strategies; Yesenia Mata, Executive Director, La Colmena; Nilbia Coyote, Executive Director, New Immigrant Community Empowerment; Alana Sivin, Program Director, Vera Institute of Justice; Lorena Kourousias, Executive Director, Mixteca

SESSION I: 9:00AM – 10:15AM

**Larinda Hooks**

Assemblymember

**George Alvarez**

Assemblymember

**Tony Simone**

Assemblymember

9:00am - 10:15am | Conference 4 - 2nd Floor***Federal Fault Lines, Community Front Lines: Securing New York and Puerto Rico's Workforce Futures***

This panel will unpack how federal disinvestment threatens the stability of human services and workforce systems in both regions. Panelists will examine the consequences for workers, families, and communities, and spotlight the strategies local leaders are advancing to safeguard opportunity. Together, they will outline what's at stake and how we can act collectively to push a bold agenda that secures resilient, equitable futures.

Panelists: Marco Carrion, President at Consortium for Worker Education; Wayne Ho, President/CEO of the Chinese-American Planning Council; Maria Lizardo, Executive Director, Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation; Bishop Mitchell G. Taylor, CEO, Urban Upbound; Gregory J Morris, New York City Employment and Training Coalition; Grace Bonilla, President & CEO of United Way of New York City; Lisa Rivera, President & CEO of the New York Legal Assistance Group

**Carmen De La Rosa**

Councilmember

9:00am - 10:15am | Conference 5 - 2nd Floor***Rebuilding for Resilience: Sustainable Infrastructure and Energy in Puerto Rico and New York***

This panel will bring together labor leaders, policymakers, community advocates, and technical experts to explore the intersection of infrastructure, climate resilience, and equity. Participants will highlight innovative infrastructure models that incorporate clean energy solutions and examine real-world case studies, including FEMA's Port of Mayagüez reconstruction and New York State's climate-aligned infrastructure initiatives. The discussion will also focus on the critical role of federal, state, and local investment in accelerating climate-conscious energy transitions, while identifying policies that ensure these investments prioritize resilience, equity, and the creation of family-sustaining jobs.

Panelists: Carmen de la Rosa, NYC Council; Francisco J Maldonado-Ramirez, New Jersey Laborers LECET - LIUNA; CJNY - Esther Rosario, Climate Justice New York; Kris Kohler, Director, Mason Tenders District Council PAC; Grace Bonilla, President & CEO of United Way of New York City; Lisa Rivera, President & CEO of the New York Legal Assistance Group

SESSION I: 9:00AM – 10:15AM

**Alicia Hyndman**

Assemblymember

*9:00am - 10:15am | Conference Room 6 - 2nd Floor****Tackling Health Equity in Healthcare Facilities and in Home Health Care: Exploring Ways to Address the Nursing Workforce Shortage***

This panel will explore the growing nursing shortage and the rise of healthcare deserts both in healthcare facilities and for home health care—critical barriers to achieving health equity for all patients. Panelists will discuss how addressing the nursing shortage through workforce development initiatives like allowing nurses to practice to the full extent of their education and training can help mitigate these inequities and strengthen the nursing workforce pipeline and the critical role of equitable reimbursement in ensuring access to care for all communities.

Panelists: Andrew Fernandez, Columbia University Nurse Anesthesia Resident; Dan Lowenstein, SVP of Government Affairs, Visiting Nurse Service of NY; Bea Grause, President, Healthcare Association of New York State (HANYS); Giovanna Mahar, CRNA, DNAP, Assistant Director of the Center for Nurse Anesthesiology and Associate Professor Albany Medical College

**Emérita Torres**

Assemblymember

*9:00am - 10:15am | Conference 7 - 2nd Floor****Planning with Purpose: Building a Resilient Future Through Clean Energy and Skilled Jobs***

This panel will explore how proactive energy and infrastructure planning can serve as both a climate adaptation strategy and a workforce development opportunity, ensuring our systems are not only ready for the next storm, but built to reflect our values of equity, sustainability, and care.

Panelists: Rory Christian, Chair & CEO, NYS Public Service Commission; Raghu Sudhakara, Vice President of Distributed Resource Integration, Con Edison; Vincent Albanese, Executive Director, New York State Laborers' Political Action Fund; Dariella Rodriguez, Director of Community Development, The Point CDC

SESSION I: 9:00AM – 10:15AM



Kristen Gonzalez

Senator

9:00am - 10:15am | Conference Room 8 - 2nd Floor
AI for All

As the development and deployment of AI tools continues at a breakneck pace, far too many communities are being impacted by this technology without their awareness, input, or feedback. This panel will discuss how AI education empowers users to be curious and critical of AI. Policies such as the the AI Literacy Act will be discussed to help inform AI users the importance of understanding how AI functions and its various impacts.

Panelists: Margaret Kaufer, President of the STEM Alliance; Jenni Warren, Program Director at Decoded Futures; Melinda Person, President, NYSUT



Kristen Gonzalez

Senator



Maritza Davila

Assemblymember

9:00am - 10:15am | Conference Room 9 - 2nd Floor
From Content to Change: Educating and Mobilizing Young People and Marginalized Communities in our Evolving Media Landscape

The rise of digital media necessitates a new playbook for building people-powered movements and spreading knowledge. Digital media presents an incredible opportunity to engage marginalized communities and young people. At the same time, social media can also contribute to disinformation and sensationalization as many turn away from traditional news outlets. This panel will tackle pressing questions: How do we curb the spread of false information? And, how can we harness the power of social platforms to mobilize communities, spark action, and drive real change?

Panelists: Ciara Lugo, Youth Organizer; Carlos Calzadilla-Palacio, President of Brooklyn Young Dems; Kayla Santosuosso, City Council Candidate for District 47; Mixhael Max Knobbe, Executive Director, BronxNet, Community Media Expert



Harvey Epstein

Assemblymember



Khaleel Anderson

Assemblymember



Robert Jackson

Senator

SESSION I: 9:00AM – 10:15AM



**Manny
De Los Santos**

Assemblymember



**Rodneyse
Bichotte-Hermelyn**

Assemblymember

9:00am - 10:15am | Conference Room 10 - 2nd Floor

SRJ in New York State and the Caribbean: Reclaiming Health, Power, and Resilience through Research and Policy

This panel brings together Dominican and Puerto Rican public health researchers, advocates, and policy leaders from the CUNY School of Public Health and Health Policy's Sexual and Reproductive Justice (SRJ) Hub, Planned Parenthood, and New York State to explore policies seeking to limit personal autonomy, access to healthcare, and resultant health impacts. Rooted in cross-island solidarity, Afro-Caribbean leadership, and the lived experiences of women of color, this session highlights state, local, and diasporic approaches to advancing health justice. We will examine the shared challenges facing women across New York, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic.

Panelists: Sharday Urtarte, Philanthropic Communication Specialist, Planned Parenthood Federation of America (National Office); Diana Romero, PhD, MA, Professor, Department of Community Health and Social Sciences, Director, Specialization in Maternal, Child, Reproductive and Sexual Health, CUNY Graduate School of Public Health and Health Policy; Melissa Baralt, Professor/Entrepreneur, Berkley College



Yudelka Tapia

Assemblymember



Dana Levenberg

Assemblymember

9:00am - 10:15am | Salon Del Mar A - 2nd Floor

Reclaiming Power: Civic Engagement as Resistance in the Face of Authoritarianism

At College and Community Fellowship (CCF), we believe that civic engagement is not just a right, it is a strategy for liberation. Through our advocacy initiatives P.O.W.E.R. (Policy Organizers for Women's Empowerment and Rights) and V.O.I.C.E. (Voters Organized for Informed Civic Engagement), both designed by one of our directly impacted staff members, women impacted by the legal system reclaim their power as policy influencers, thought leaders, and community changemakers. This presentation will share how we center directly impacted individuals in efforts to preserve and expand access to higher education during and after incarceration

Panelists: Minerva Coffie, Community Engagement & Strategic Initiatives Manager, CCF; Luisa Lopez, Executive Director, Latino Social Work Coalition; Judy Clark, Director, Survivor's Justice Project; Serena Martin, Executive Director, New Hour; Aisha Elliott, Chief Program Officer, Women's Prison Association

SESSION I: 9:00AM – 10:15AM

**Steven Raga**

Assemblymember

*9:00am - 10:15am | Salon Del Mar B - 2nd Floor****From NYC to Puerto Rico: Place-Based Strategies for Economic Development Through Culture and Tourism***

This panel will explore how cultural programming, tourism initiatives, and Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) are leveraging place-based strategies to drive inclusive economic development—and what lessons can be adapted for Puerto Rico. Panelists will offer real-world models for how collaborative cultural and economic development initiatives—rooted in community identity—can support local businesses, increase foot traffic, and promote equity.

Panelists: Sandra Perez, Former Executive Director, NYC Pride; Olga Luz Tirado, Marketing and Tourism Consultant, former Director of Bronx Tourism Council; Jeffrey LeFrancois, Executive Director, Meatpacking District BID; Jeanette Nigro, Founder, Perch Advisors; Jennifer Tausig, Economic Development Consultant

*9:00am - 10:15am | Garden Wing Auditorium - 1st Floor****CLE COURSE (The Independence of the Judiciary and the Rule of Law)***

SESSION 2: 10:30AM – 11:45AM

Flamingo A (2nd Floor)	Colonialism, Resistance, and Solidarity: Puerto Rico & Palestine <i>Assemblymember Marcela Mitaynes</i>	Conf. Room 5 (2nd Floor)	Shared Struggles, Shared Strength: A Dialogue Across Communities – Building Bridges Between Latina, African American, Pacific Islander, Puerto Rican, and Jewish Voices in Unity <i>Assemblymember Nily Rozic</i>
Flamingo B (2nd Floor)	Protecting Latino Communities Through Financial Empowerment <i>Senator Luis Sepulveda and Assemblymember Harvey Epstein</i>	Conf. Room 6 (2nd Floor)	Navigating Medicaid Challenges: Strategies for Protecting Health Care Access and Equity in New York and Puerto Rico <i>Assemblymember Maritza Davila</i>
Flamingo C (2nd Floor)	The Price of Purpose: A Bold Agenda for New York's & Puerto Rico's Human Services Sector <i>Assemblymember Emérita Torres and Senator Leroy Comrie</i>	Conf. Room 7 (2nd Floor)	Protecting Human Services during National Polycrisis <i>Assemblymember Manny De Los Santos</i>
Flamingo D (2nd Floor)	Juntos nos levantamos: The State University of New York, University of Puerto Rico, and Puerto Rican NGO Para La Naturaleza Partner to Empower Students and Address Social, Health, & Environmental Justice Issues <i>Assemblymember Gabriella Romero</i>	Conf. Room 8 (2nd Floor)	No es extraño este sitio para la danza: A Video Installation of Diasporic Rhythm and Resistance <i>Assemblymember Karines Reyes</i>
Tropical A (2nd Floor)	PR/HYLI: Empowering Student Voices through SOMOS <i>Assemblymember Karines Reyes</i>	Conf. Room 9 (2nd Floor)	Overcoming Barriers to Mental Health Support: Developing a Peer Support Navigator Certificate Program for Latiné and Puerto Rican Communities <i>Senator Nathalia Fernandez and Assemblymember Rebecca Seawright</i>
Tropical B (2nd Floor)	Safeguarding Food Justice in the Face of Federal Cuts <i>Assemblymember Jessica González-Rojas, Senator Zellnor Myrie and Assemblymember Charles Fall</i>	Conf. Room 10 (2nd Floor)	Keeping New York Housed: How Federal Funding Cuts To The Social Safety Net Will Impact New York And The Way Forward <i>Assemblymember Emérita Torres, Assemblymember Harvey Epstein and Assemblymember Steven Raga</i>
Tropical C (2nd Floor)	Aging with Dignity: Pathways to Inclusion and Equity <i>Senator Cordell Cleare and Assemblymember Rebecca Seawright</i>	Salon Del Mar A (2nd Floor)	Key Interventions: How We Can Still Achieve Our Climate, Jobs, and Equity Mandates <i>Senator Jessica Ramos and Assemblymember Manny De Los Santos</i>
Conf. Room 3 (2nd Floor)	Leveling the Playing Field: Advancing Youth Equity Through Policy and Partnership <i>Assemblymember John Zaccaro Jr.</i>	Salon Del Mar B (2nd Floor)	From Enforcement to Empowerment: How New York is Building Safer and Stronger Communities <i>Senator Julia Salazar</i>
Conf. Room 4 (2nd Floor)	Supporting Vulnerable Communities through School-Nonprofit Partnerships <i>Assemblymember Catalina Cruz, Assemblymember Jessica Gonzalez-Rojas and Assemblymember Jonathan Rivera</i>	Garden Wing Auditorium (1st Floor)	CLE COURSE (The Independence of the Judiciary and the Rule of Law)

SESSION 2: 10:30AM – 11:45AM

**Marcela Mitaynes**

Assemblymember

*10:30am - 11:45am | Flamingo A - 2nd Floor****Colonialism, Resistance, and Solidarity: Puerto Rico & Palestine***

This panel brings together activists, scholars, and community leaders to explore the deep historical and contemporary bonds between Palestine and Puerto Rico. Both nations share legacies of colonization, displacement, and resistance, as well as vibrant cultures of survival and resilience. Panelists will discuss how the struggles for self-determination intersect, what lessons can be learned from each other's movements, and how transnational solidarity strengthens both causes. Participants will also reflect on the role of art, organizing, and international alliances in building a future rooted in justice, freedom, and sovereignty for all oppressed peoples.

Panelists: Linda Sarsour, Palestinian activist; Beth Miller, Jewish Voices for Peace; Alexa Aviles, NYC Council Member; Rafael Bernabe, Professor, University of Puerto Rico; Sonia Santiago, Madres Contra La Guerra

**Harvey Epstein**

Assemblymember

**Luis Sepulveda**

Senator

*10:30am - 11:45am | Flamingo B - 2nd Floor****Protecting Latino Communities Through Financial Empowerment***

The importance of financial empowerment continues to gain more attention and acknowledgment. Thirty-five states now require students take a course in personal finance to graduate high school. Adults continue to face debt in the face of the rising cost of living and inflation. Addressing financial stressors is key to building resilience in vulnerable Latino communities, ensuring they can avoid scams and succeed economically. This workshop will explore financial empowerment as a means to educate and uplift Latino communities and protect them from external harms.

Panelists: Vilda Vera Mayuga, Commissioner, NYC Department of Consumer and Worker Protection; Eileen Torres, Executive Director, BronxWorks; Diana Caba, Vice President for Community and Economic Development, Hispanic Federation; Dr. Alexander Nuñez-Torres, Associate Professor, Lehman College; Dr. José Higuera López, Director, CUNY Mexican Studies Institute, Lehman College

SESSION 2: 10:30AM – 11:45AM

**Emérita Torres**

Assemblymember

**Leroy Comrie**

Senator

*10:30am - 11:45am | Flamingo C - 2nd Floor****The Price of Purpose: A Bold Agenda for New York's & Puerto Rico's Human Services Sector***

The human services sector and workforce play a vital role in delivering essential health, housing, education, and social services across New York State and Puerto Rico. Yet, the very professionals and providers who support our communities often face significant economic insecurity, systemic underinvestment, and structural challenges. This session brings together leaders from government, academia, the nonprofit sector, and unions to explore bold strategies for strengthening economic security, equity, and operational sustainability in the human services field.

Panelists: Raysa S. Rodriguez, Executive Director, Citizens' Committee for Children of New York; Dr. Eduardo Lugo Hernandez, Associate Professor, University of Puerto Rico; Henry Garrido, Executive Director, District Council 37; Jennifer Jones Austin, President & CEO, Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies; Julie Won, New York City Council, Chair Committee on Contracts; Melanie Hartzog, President & CEO, The New York Foundling; Michelle Jackson, Executive Director, Human Services Council; Yexenia Markland, First Deputy Director, NYC Mayor's Office of Contracts

**Gabriella Romero**

Assemblymember

*10:30am - 11:45am | Flamingo D - 2nd Floor****Juntos nos levantamos: The State University of New York, University of Puerto Rico, and Puerto Rican NGO Para La Naturaleza Partner to Empower Students and Address Social, Health, & Environmental Justice Issues***

The State University of New York (SUNY), the University of Puerto Rico (UPR), and Para la Naturaleza developed a partnership that builds upon their shared vision. This initiative extends the inextricable link between Puerto Rico and New York and continues to create experiential learning and research opportunities for students with limited means in New York and Puerto Rico. This panel will examine the transformative benefits of knowledge sharing between SUNY, UPR, and Para la Naturaleza.

Panelists: Alberto Lloveras, President, Para La Naturaleza; Juliana Hernandez-Commisso, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Policy Implementation and Deputy Chief of Staff; Alberto Cardelle, President, SUNY Oneonta; Havidan Rodriguez, President, University at Albany; Mark Lichtenstein, Executive Operating Office SUNY ESF; University of Puerto Rico students: Lorena Z Rivera-Perez and Carlos M Velez Gonce; SUNY students: Claudia Munoz-Vazquez and Ana Arill-Monz

SESSION 2: 10:30AM – 11:45AM

**Karines Reyes**

Assemblymember

*10:30am - 11:45am | Tropical A - 2nd Floor****PR/HYLI: Empowering Student Voices through SOMOS***

In this student-presented panel, participants will learn about The Angelo Del Toro Puerto Rican/Hispanic Youth Leadership Institute (PR/HYLI), an extracurricular opportunity available to Hispanic high school students across New York State. Through our multicultural and multilingual program, PR/HYLI delegates become community leaders, as they learn about government, civic engagement, and the legislative process. Attendees will hear directly from student panelists to learn about how PR/HYLI has empowered Hispanic students from all parts of New York State for more than 35 years, providing them with access and connections to community role models and elected officials in all local NYS regions.

Panelists: Dr. Gladys Cruz, District Superintendent, Questar III BOCES; Emily Gargiulo, PR/HYLI New York Statewide Coordinator; Adrian Apreza, Student, NYC Delegation; Diana Grullon Rodriguez, Student, Hudson Valley Delegation; Dylan De Roda, Student, Capital District Delegation; Kyara Murphy, Student, Monroe Delegation; Geovany Brown Ordonez, Student, Western New York Delegation; Yennifer Montes, Chaperone, Capital District Delegation; Ana Sanabria, Chaperone, NYC / Hudson Valley Delegation; Lance Weinert, Chaperone, Western New York Delegation

**Jessica
González-Rojas**

Assemblymember

**Zellnor
Myrie**

Senator

*10:30am - 11:45am | Tropical B - 2nd Floor****Safeguarding Food Justice in the Face of Federal Cuts***

As federal nutrition assistance programs face potential reductions that could impact millions of families nationwide, including thousands of New Yorkers, communities are confronting an urgent need for innovative food security strategies. Panelists will discuss the impact of proposed federal reductions, highlight the role of state-level programs like Nourish NY and the Nutrition Outreach and Education Program (NOEP), and share successful models for strengthening local food systems.

Panelists: Jordan Correa, Chief Programs Officer, Rethink Food; Shana McCormick, Executive Director, Rap4Bronx; Liz Accles, Executive Director, Community Food Advocates; Andres Vives, Chief Executive Officer, Hunger Solutions New York; Maritere Padilla Rodriguez, Senior Director for Policy and Advocacy, Puerto Rico, Hispanic Federation

**Charles
Fall**

Assemblymember

SESSION 2: 10:30AM – 11:45AM

**Cordell Cleare**

Senator

**Rebecca Seawright**

Assemblymember

*10:30am - 11:45am | Tropical C - 2nd Floor****Aging with Dignity: Pathways to Inclusion and Equity***

Join us for a dynamic Policy Workshop on Advancing Inclusivity for older adults, an interactive forum focused on developing policy solutions to address the complex and interconnected challenges facing aging populations today. This workshop brings together policymakers, advocates, service providers, researchers, and community members committed to ensuring that older adults can age with dignity, security, and purpose.

Panelists: Crystal Hudson, New York City Chair, New York City Committee on Aging; Lorraine Cortés-Vázquez, Commissioner, Department for The Aging; Robert Cordero, CEO, Grand Street Settlement; Barbara Baer, Director of the Home Sharing Program, New York Foundation for Seniors; Kevin Jones, Associate State Director, Advocacy, AARP; Mike Spano, Mayor, City of Yonkers

**John Zaccaro Jr.**

Assemblymember

*10:30am - 11:45am | Conference Room 3 - 2nd Floor****Leveling the Playing Field: Advancing Youth Equity Through Policy and Partnership***

This session will explore how youth sport programs are being used as vehicles for social change and how government leaders and community organizations can partner to amplify their impact. Through a discussion that centers real-world examples from Sport for Good NYC, a Laureus USA-backed coalition of 60+ organizations, and grassroots leaders from Puerto Rico and New York, we'll examine how sport is being used to promote positive youth and community outcomes and what more can be done.

Panelists: Council Member Althea Stevens, Chair, NYC Council Committee on Children & Youth; Husein Yatabarry, Executive Director, Neighborhood United, Leadership Council Member, Laureus USA; Gabby Velez, Educator; Former Puerto Rican Women's National Baseball Team Member; Lynda Hamilton, Development Director, Harlem Junior Tennis & Education Program; Rob Saltares, New York Program Officer, Laureus USA

SESSION 2: 10:30AM – 11:45AM



**Catalina
Cruz**

Assemblymember



**Jessica
González-Rojas**

Assemblymember



**Jonathan
Rivera**

Assemblymember

10:30am - 11:45am | Conference 4 - 2nd Floor

Supporting Vulnerable Communities through School-Nonprofit Partnerships

In the wake of major federal cuts that have left schools and students with fewer resources, community-based organizations and educational partners are stepping up to bridge the gap. These partnerships not only provide critical academic and after-school support, but also connect young people with essential services such as food access, skill development, and sustainable food education. Together, they demonstrate how creative collaborations can sustain vulnerable communities and expand opportunities for the next generation.

Panelists: Manuela Zamora, NY Sun Works Executive Director; Danielle Ellman, Commonpoint CEO and President; Melissa Aviles-Ramos, Chancellor, NYC Department of Education; Rachel Sabella, Director, No Kid Hungry NY; Dr. DaMia Harris-Madden, Commissioner, NYS Office of Children and Family Services; Maria Fernandez, Dep. Sec of Education, Exec. Chamber; Jennifer Pyles, Executive Director, Conference of Big 5 Schools District



Assemblymember

10:30am - 11:45am | Conference 5 - 2nd Floor

Shared Struggles, Shared Strength: A Dialogue Across Communities – Building Bridges Between Latina, African American, Pacific Islander, Puerto Rican, and Jewish Voices in Unity

This dynamic panel fosters an open and empowering conversation between Latina, African American, Pacific Islander, Puerto Rican, and Jewish voices. The session delves into the shared experiences of systemic inequality, cultural resilience, and the power of solidarity in diverse communities. Participants will explore the intersections of their histories, struggles, and triumphs, while emphasizing the importance of unity and mutual support in confronting social challenges. Through storytelling, dialogue, and collaborative problem-solving, this panel aims to strengthen the bonds between these communities and inspire collective action for a more inclusive and just future.

Panelists: Mark Levine, NYC Comptroller; Eric Dinowitz, City Council Member; Masha Pearl, Executive Director, The Blue Card; Lewis Zuchman, Executive Director, Scan Harbor Inc.; Henry Garrido, Executive Director, DC37; Henry Rubio, President of CSA, Diego Mandelbaum Executive Director, JCC Puerto Rico

SESSION 2: 10:30AM – 11:45AM

**Maritza Davila**

Assemblymember

*10:30am - 11:45am | Conference Room 6 - 2nd Floor****Navigating Medicaid Challenges: Strategies for Protecting Health Care Access and Equity in New York and Puerto Rico***

Through the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA), Congress has approved significant reductions in Medicaid funding, posing serious challenges to the healthcare safety net for millions of vulnerable residents across New York State. These Medicaid cuts threaten to limit access to essential healthcare services, increase uncompensated care costs for providers, and exacerbate health disparities among low-income populations, seniors, and individuals with disabilities. This panel will examine the direct impacts of these federal Medicaid funding reductions on communities throughout the state, and highlight Puerto Rico's ongoing struggle with federal parity, which affects funding and access to healthcare services.

Panelists: Carlos Cuevas, Former Senior Policy Advisor to the NYS Medicaid Director; Director for Policy and Advocacy, Puerto Rico, Hispanic Federation; Julietta Lopez, Vice President Federal Advocacy and Network Mobilization, Hispanic Federation; Zach Hennessey, Chief Strategy Officer and EVP of WholeYouNYC; Ricardo Rivera-Cardona, President, MMM of Puerto Rico & former Head of ASES (Puerto Rico Medicaid Program)

**Manny
De Los Santos**

Assemblymember

*10:30am - 11:45am | Conference Room 7 - 2nd Floor****Protecting Human Services during National Polycrisis***

Every day, human services organizations provide essential services to New Yorkers in nearly every aspect of life. Yet, this critical sector faces unprecedented national funding cuts, policy changes, and politicization. This follows decades of disinvestment that contribute to government-sanctioned poverty-level wages, unsustainable funding practices, and other issues. This panel brings together leaders who are building resilience in the human services sector by sharing skills in legal services, financial planning, advocacy, digital security, and more.

Panelists: Michelle Jackson, Human Services Council of New York; Luisa Lopez, President, Latino Social Work Coalition; Pascale Leone, Supportive Housing Network of NY; Tierra Labrada, Supportive Housing Network of NY; Shambhavi Manglik, Robin Hood Foundation, Senior Program Officer

SESSION 2: 10:30AM – 11:45AM



Karines Reyes

Assemblymember

10:30am - 11:45am | Conference Room 8 - 2nd Floor
No es extraño este sitio para la danza: A Video Installation of Diasporic Rhythm and Resistance

Commissioned by the CUNY Mexican Studies Institute and directed by Puerto Rican filmmaker Noelia Quintero Herencia, this vibrant video installation offers a poetic and political tribute to the enduring creative force of Hispanic communities in New York City. Through archival imagery, movement, music, and spoken word, it traces the intersections of literature, dance, and activism from the 1970s through the 1990s—mapping a decolonial city shaped by resistance and reinvention.

Panelists: Noelia Quintero Herencia, Director; Rita Indiana, Music Producer; José Higuera López, Director, CUNY Mexican Studies Institute; Dejanira Álvarez Cardenas, General Coordinator



Nathalia Fernandez

Senator



Rebecca Seawright

Assemblymember

10:30am - 11:45am | Conference Room 9 - 2nd Floor
Overcoming Barriers to Mental Health Support: Developing a Peer Support Navigator Certificate Program for Latiné and Puerto Rican Communities

Latine communities face significant challenges in accessing mental health care and navigating complex social service systems. Structural barriers such as language, stigma, cultural differences, immigration status, and historical inequities continue to leave many underserved. At the same time, the lack of accessible training pathways for community members interested in mental health work limits workforce diversity and perpetuates disparities in care. Mental Health Task-Sharing is a promising strategy to strengthen the behavioral health workforce while addressing cultural and linguistic needs in underserved communities. This panel will explore the process of developing a Mental Health Task-Sharing Certificate Program, highlighting lessons from the field, policy considerations, and pathways for scaling community-based training that empowers Latine communities.

Panelists: Victoria Ngo, PhD, Associate Professor, CUNY Graduate School of Public Health & Health Policy (SPH) and Director, CUNY SPH Center for Innovation in Mental Health; Alexandra Restrepo Henao, MD, MCs, MPhil, PhD, Post-doctoral Research Fellow, Center for Innovation in Mental Health, CUNY Graduate School of Public Health & Health Policy (SPH); Danielle Greene, DrPH, Executive Director of State and Local Public Health Initiatives, CUNY Graduate School of Public Health & Health Policy (SPH); Eliut Rivera-Segarra, PhD, Assistant Professor, Ponce Health Sciences University; José Calderón President, NYC Hispanic Federation

SESSION 2: 10:30AM – 11:45AM

**Emérita Torres**

Assemblymember

**Harvey Epstein**

Assemblymember

**Steven Raga**

Assemblymember

*10:30am - 11:45am | Conference Room 10 - 2nd Floor****Keeping New York Housed: How Federal Funding Cuts To The Social Safety Net Will Impact New York And The Way Forward***

New York State's affordability crisis has led to increased homelessness and housing instability. Between January 2023 and January 2024, homelessness in New York State increased by 53.1% – more than four times the average rate in the rest of the country. This panel will discuss the way federal funding cuts and policy changes are impacting unhoused New Yorkers and threatening the housing stability of renters, and will make recommendations for ways New York State can move forward to best protect its most marginalized communities.

Panelists: Nicole Branca, CEO, New Destiny Housing; Ahmed Tigani, Commissioner, NYC Housing Preservation and Development; Jennifer Hernandez, Director of Campaigns, Make the Road; Ellen Davidson, Staff Attorney, Legal Aid Society; Lauren Schuster, Vice President of Government Affairs, Urban Resource Institute; Kristin Miller, HSU

**Jessica Ramos**

Senator

*10:30am - 11:45am | Salon Del Mar A - 2nd Floor****Key Interventions: How We Can Still Achieve Our Climate, Jobs, and Equity Mandates***

New York is falling behind the climate targets mandated by the 2019 Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act. Meanwhile, Puerto Rico's electricity grid remains fragile following devastating hurricanes in recent years. This panel will discuss a recent report from the Climate Jobs Institute at Cornell's ILR School outlining key policy interventions New York State can take now to drive high-quality, equitable job creation in the climate economy. Panelists will also discuss needed interventions to build a sustainable, thriving clean energy sector in Puerto Rico.

Panelists: Lynda Nguyen, Climate Jobs Associate, Cornell ILR Climate Jobs Institute; Zach Cunningham, Assistant Director, Cornell ILR Climate Jobs Institute; Santos Rodriguez, Chief of Staff, New York Building and Construction Trades Council; Commissioner Roberta Reardon

SESSION 2: 10:30AM – 11:45AM

**Julia Salazar**

Senator

*10:30am - 11:45am | Salon Del Mar B - 2nd Floor****From Enforcement to Empowerment: How New York is Building Safer and Stronger Communities***

At a time of public anxiety and polarized debates about public safety, New York State has embraced a bold, community-first approach to criminal justice. In this session, DCJS leadership will share lessons from the field, from convening cross-sector coalitions to implementing youth-centered programs in communities historically deprived of resources and opportunities. Attendees will learn how government agencies at all levels can be reimagined as trusted partners in creating safer, stronger neighborhoods.

Panelists: Rossana Rosado, Commissioner, DCJS; Joseph Popcun, Executive Deputy Commissioner, DCJS; Dr. DaMia Harris-Madden, OCFS Commissioner; Rob DeLeon, Deputy CEO, The Fortune Society; Raul Espinoza, All Kings

*10:30am - 11:45am | Garden Wing Auditorium - 1st Floor****CLE COURSE (The Independence of the Judiciary and the Rule of Law)***

SESSION 3: 1:45PM – 3:00PM

Flamingo A (2nd Floor)	From Foundation to Futures: The Pivotal Role of Latinos in (re)Building and (re)Imagining Public Spaces <i>Assemblymember Emérita Torres</i>	Conf. Room 5 (2nd Floor)	Rise Through Resilience: Por Nosotros, Policy, and the Power of Comunidad <i>Senator Jessica Ramos and Assemblymember Manny De Los Santos</i>
Flamingo B (2nd Floor)	Reclaiming the Algorithm: Community Power in Data and AI <i>Assemblymember Emérita Torres</i>	Conf. Room 6 (2nd Floor)	Weathering the Federal Storm: How New York State is Safeguarding Our Transition to Cleaner Energy, Air and Water <i>Assemblymember Marcela Mitaynes, Assemblymember Michaelle Solages and Senator Kevin Parker</i>
Flamingo C (2nd Floor)	Combating Systems of Harm and Building Unified Solutions <i>Assemblymember Gabriella Romero</i>	Conf. Room 7 (2nd Floor)	You cannot erase us: Health Care Access Challenges and the Impact on Hispanic/Latine Communities in New York and Puerto Rico <i>Senator Kristen Gonzalez, Assemblymember Amy Paulin and Assemblymember Tony Simone</i>
Flamingo D (2nd Floor)	Under Pressure: Navigating Federal Cuts and Defending Latino & Immigrant Families' Access to Healthcare and Nutrition <i>Senator Gustavo Rivera, Assemblymember Amanda Septimo, Assemblymember Jessica Gonzalez-Rojas and Assemblymember David I. Weprin</i>	Conf. Room 8 (2nd Floor)	The Power of Property Management in the Community and the Economy <i>Senator Julia Salazar</i>
Tropical A (2nd Floor)	Reimagining a Better Future for App- Based Delivery: Advancing Micromobility Infrastructure and Labor Rights Across NYC and Puerto Rico <i>Assemblymember Claire Valdez</i>	Conf. Room 9 (2nd Floor)	Run. Win. Lead. Next Gen Leaders on Being in Office & How They Got There <i>Senator Nathalia Fernandez, Assemblymember Amanda Septimo, Assemblymember Gabriella Romero, Assemblymember Jordan Wright and Assemblymember Alex Bores</i>
Tropical B (2nd Floor)	Collaborative Solutions to Substance Use Disorder and Mental Health: Political and Social Strategies to Support Latine Communities <i>Senator Nathalia Fernandez</i>	Conf. Room 10 (2nd Floor)	Health Inequities: A Human Rights Crisis for the Latino Community <i>Senator Jamaal Bailey</i>
Tropical C (2nd Floor)	Alternatives as Default: Scaling a Just Vision for Community Safety <i>Assemblymember Catalina Cruz</i>	Salon Del Mar A (2nd Floor)	Fostering Innovation and Entrepreneurship in and between NYC and Puerto Rico <i>Assemblymember John Zaccaro, Jr.</i>
Conf. Room 3 (2nd Floor)	Raíces de Resiliencia: Empowering Latino Communities and Rebuilding Higher Education in the Current Political Climate <i>Assemblymember Yudelka Tapia and Assemblymember Alicia Hyndman</i>	Salon Del Mar B (2nd Floor)	Pathways to Tenant Ownership <i>Senator Zellnor Myrie</i>
Conf. Room 4 (2nd Floor)	From the Bronx to Bayamón: Housing Justice, Climate Displacement, and the Fight to Stay Home <i>Senator Luis Sepulveda and Assemblymember George Alvarez</i>	Garden Wing Auditorium (1st Floor)	What does the Deployment of ICE and the National Guard mean for Black and Brown Communities? <i>Assemblymember Rodneyse Bichotte-Hermelyn</i>

SESSION 3: 1:45PM – 3:00PM

**Emérita Torres**

Assemblymember

*1:45pm - 3:00pm | Flamingo A - 2nd Floor****From Foundation to Futures: The Pivotal Role of Latinos in (re)Building and (re)Imagining Public Spaces***

This workshop aims to explore the pivotal role of Latinos in shaping and developing public spaces, discussing how they have fundamentally influenced the design, use, and meaning of public spaces. We will highlight the role Latinos play in rebuilding and reimagining public spaces, transforming them into a thriving network of parks, playgrounds, urban farms, community gardens, waterways, and other essential community assets, access to which helps the community rise.

Panelists: Iris Rodriguez-Rosa, Commissioner, NYC Parks; Nilka Martell, Board Chair, Bronx River Alliance; Shekar Krishnan, Council Member, NYC Council Parks Committee Chair; Misha Akopdjanov, CEO, Kind Sun Initiative & Director of IT, Social Service Employees Union Local 371; Héctor J. Berdecía-Hernández, Director-General, Centro de Conservación y Restauración de Puerto Rico (CENCOR) San Juan, Puerto Rico; Jessenia Aponte, Bronx Borough Commissioner, NYC Parks

**Emérita Torres**

Assemblymember

*1:45pm - 3:00pm | Flamingo B - 2nd Floor****Reclaiming the Algorithm: Community Power in Data and AI***

Data fuels everything from health systems to hiring practices, but too often, data systems and AI builders lack input from Latino communities. This leads to misrepresentation and harm in hiring, healthcare, and other needs. This panel will spotlight a bold vision for community-led data sovereignty, featuring nonprofits that create custom datasets and tools to tell their own stories, alongside AI experts and advocates working to ensure that algorithms and AI policies center Latino voices. Together, panelists will show how community control of data can drive equity and empower Latino communities.

Panelists: Wesner Pierre, CEO, Partnership With Children; Wayne Ho, CEO, Chinese-American Planning Council; Andre White, CEO, Phipps Neighborhoods; Dr. Olivia Ildefonso, CEO, North Arrow; Claudia Soriano, Senior Director of Development and External Affairs, The Knowledge House; Chris Hemphill, AI Expert and Fellow, NYU McSilver Institute for Poverty Policy and Research; Dr. Kara Emery, Director of Data Science, NYU McSilver Institute for Poverty Policy and Research

SESSION 3: 1:45PM – 3:00PM

**Gabriella Romero**

Assemblymember

*1:45pm - 3:00pm | Flamingo C - 2nd Floor****Combating Systems of Harm and Building Unified Solutions***

Last year's SOMOS panel traced the history of the "systems of harm" in both the criminal legal system and the family policing/child welfare system, and their disproportionate impact on marginalized communities. This year, we will continue the conversation by shifting the focus to combatting these systems of harm through unified, cross-sector strategies rather than "piecemeal" fixes. This panel will highlight recent legislative victories, alongside initiatives that strengthen individuals, families and communities. Drawing on the lenses of social work, public health, law, policy, panelists will explore how traumainformed, equity-driven approaches can reimagine a future that heals and uplifts, rather than harms.

Panelists: Kate Wood, MSW, Associate Director for Inclusive Excellence, University at Albany, State University of New York; Dr. Dorcey Applyrs, MPH, Chief City Auditor, City of Albany; Nila Natarajan, Associate Director of Policy & Family Defense, Brooklyn Defender Services; Shereen White, Director of Advocacy & Policy, Children's Rights; Lavern Harry, VP for Prevention, Foster Care, and Adoption, Graham Windham

**Gustavo Rivera**

Senator

**Amanda Septimo**

Assemblymember

*1:45pm - 3:00pm | Flamingo D - 2nd Floor****Under Pressure: Navigating Federal Cuts and Defending Latino & Immigrant Families' Access to Healthcare and Nutrition***

As federal legislation and regulatory changes reshape key safety net programs, Latino and immigrant communities across New York and Puerto Rico face growing threats to their health and economic security. This workshop brings together experts from various sectors to unpack the health-related provisions in HR1, analyze the impact of recent and proposed Medicaid and SNAP cuts, and explore legislative/policy responses to protect vulnerable families.

Panelists: Elisabeth Benjamin, Vice President & Managing Director, The Community Services Society of New York; Jorge Rivera Agosto, Associate, Greenberg Traurig LLP; Rose Duhan, CEO, Community Health Care Association of New York State; Chef Greg Silverman, CEO, West Side Campaign Against Hunger

**Jessica González-Rojas**

Assemblymember

**David I. Weprin**

Assemblymember

SESSION 3: 1:45PM – 3:00PM

**Claire Valdez**

Assemblymember

*1:45pm - 3:00pm | Tropical A - 2nd Floor****Reimagining a Better Future for App-Based Delivery: Advancing Micromobility Infrastructure and Labor Rights Across NYC and Puerto Rico***

App-based delivery services have rapidly expanded across NYC and Puerto Rico, offering consumers easy access to food, groceries, and medicine. But this multibillion-dollar industry profits off the labor of delivery workers who lack basic protections, while also charging high fees to both restaurants and consumers who depend on the service. In this panel, labor leaders from Puerto Rico, advocates for street safety and worker rights will come together to explore how we can build a future where delivery workers are protected, urban infrastructure is reimagined, and the streets are reclaimed for the working class.

Panelists: Ligia Gualpa, Executive Director, Workers Justice Project; Shawn Garcia, Bronx Organizer, Transportation Alternatives; Diego Gerena-Quinones, E-Cargo Bike Pioneer, Puerto Rico; William Medina, Member Leader, Los Deliveristas Unidos

**Nathalia Fernandez**

Senator

*1:45pm - 3:00pm | Tropical B - 2nd Floor****Collaborative Solutions to Substance Use Disorder and Mental Health: Political and Social Strategies to Support Latine Communities***

This panel features experts from the State, academia, and provider organizations who will examine social and political determinants of health, mental health, and substance use disorder in Latine communities. This includes a discussion on historic policies that have led us to the current moment, what NYS is doing to right those wrongs, which policies data show are effective and impactful, and how these policies are playing out on the ground right now. Finally, we will discuss how we move forward to promote health and wealth in our communities at home.

Panelists: Blanca Ramirez, President/CEO, Comunilife; Jonnel Doris, CEO, StartCare; Michael T. McRae, PhD, Chief Programs & Strategy Officer, StartCare; Sean J. Haley PhD, MPH, Associate Professor, Department of Health Policy and Management, City University of New York's Graduate School of Public Health and Health Policy; Carmelita Cruz, Esq., Director, Office of Health Equity and Policy Initiatives, NYS Department of Health; Tina Kim, Deputy Commissioner, NYS Office of Health Equity and Human Rights

SESSION 3: 1:45PM – 3:00PM

**Catalina Cruz**

Assemblymember

*1:45pm - 3:00pm | Tropical C - 2nd Floor****Alternatives as Default: Scaling a Just Vision for Community Safety***

New York City is approaching a pivotal moment in 2026, when a new administration could redefine public safety by investing in prevention and community-based supports rather than punishment. For decades, Black and Latine communities have borne the brunt of disinvestment and racialized policing, resulting in disproportionate arrests and jail admissions, but the city's extensive network of alternatives to incarceration (ATIs) offers a proven path forward. This panel will bring together diverse stakeholders to discuss scaling ATIs, reimagining safety as community investment, and addressing the intersections between incarceration and immigration detention.

Panelists: Joseph Zayas, Chief Administrative Judge for New York State; Edwina Richardson, Deputy Chief Administrative Judge of New York State; Rob DeLeon, Deputy Chief Executive Officer for the Fortune Society; Dr. Gisele Castro, Executive Director of Exalt Youth; Andre Ward, Executive Director, John Jay College Institute for Justice and Opportunity; Jonathan McLean, CEO, CASES

**Yudelka Tapia**

Assemblymember

**Alicia Hyndman**

Assemblymember

*1:45pm - 3:00pm | Conference Room 3 - 2nd Floor****Raíces de Resiliencia: Empowering Latino Communities and Rebuilding Higher Education in the Current Political Climate***

This workshop highlights the enduring work of the Association of Latino Faculty and Staff (ALFS) at Bronx Community College (BCC) in strengthening the resilience and success of Puerto Rican and broader Latino communities within the Bronx, home of the largest Puerto Rican diaspora in the United States. Rooted in cultura, compromiso, and comunidad, ALFS has long championed institutional equity, cultural affirmation, and intergenerational support for the success of Latinos in higher education spaces and beyond.

Panelists: Jessenia Paoli, Esq., Interim Assistant Vice President for Student Success, Vice Chair of the Association of Latino Faculty and Staff, Bronx Community College – CUNY; Tiffany Dubon-Yard, Associate Director of Student Life, Chair of the Association of Latino Faculty and Staff, Bronx Community College – CUNY; Faculty Member, Association of Latino Faculty and Staff, Bronx Community College – CUNY; John B. King Jr., Chancellor, SUNY; Félix V. Matos Rodríguez, Chancellor, CUNY; Marc Jerome, President of Monroe University; Association of Private Colleges (APC) Representative; Lola W. Brabham, Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities (CICU) President

SESSION 3: 1:45PM – 3:00PM

**Luis Sepulveda**

Senator

**George Alvarez**

Assemblymember

*1:45pm - 3:00pm | Conference Room 4 - 2nd Floor****From the Bronx to Bayamón: Housing Justice, Climate Displacement, and the Fight to Stay Home***

This workshop explores how working families, Latino communities, seniors, and essential workers across these regions are navigating overlapping crises: rising homelessness, affordability gaps, zoning restrictions, and climate-driven displacement. Participants will hear from housing advocates, organizers, and residents with lived experience who are on the frontlines of these challenges.

Panelists: Laura Harding, Esq., Housing Consultant; Dr. Xellex Z. Rivera (Dr. X), Chief Program Officer, Housing Solutions of NY; Pilar Moya-Mancera, Executive Director, Housing Help, Inc.; Maya Bailey, Senior Vice President/Executive Deputy Council - Acacia Network, Inc.

**Jessica Ramos**

Senator

**Manny De Los Santos**

Assemblymember

*1:45pm - 3:00pm | Conference Room 5 - 2nd Floor****Rise Through Resilience: Por Nosotros, Policy, and the Power of Comunidad***

This workshop brings together two urgent conversations: the systemic need to address PTSD and workplace trauma through policy, and the community-driven efforts to reimagine mental wellness for Latinx frontline workers. Across Puerto Rico and the diaspora, Latinx families and workers shoulder the weight of post-pandemic realities, immigration crises, housing instability, and workplace trauma. Recognizing trauma as both a personal and collective challenge underscores the urgency of legislative responses, such as New York's Bill S755, which seeks to expand PTSD coverage and workplace protections. This panel will unite policymakers, legal advocates, social work leaders, and community practitioners from both Puerto Rico and New York. Together, we will explore how culturally rooted healing, family engagement, and supportive policies can strengthen mental health across our communities. The session will also include an interactive experience from the Por Nosotros curriculum, inviting participants to feel what it means to reimagine wellness in action.

Panelists: Maria Lugo, Senior Director for Health Initiatives at Hispanic Federation; Rosita Martinez, LCSW, Senior Vice President of Supportive Housing for ICL; Alex Rosado, Workers Compensation Alliance; Budy Jamilly Whitfield, LCSW, Assistant Vice President of Behavioral Health & Wellness at JCCA; Dr. Beverly Raudales Chief Program Officer at Comunilife, Inc

SESSION 3: 1:45PM – 3:00PM

**Marcela Mitaynes**

Assemblymember

**Michaelle Solages**

Assemblymember

*1:45pm - 3:00pm | Conference Room 6 - 2nd Floor****Weathering the Federal Storm: How New York State is Safeguarding Our Transition to Cleaner Energy, Air and Water***

The panel will bring together a diverse range of energy and environmental leaders for a discussion about the benefits of collaboration and resolve to address the recent impact of federal funding cuts and regulatory rollbacks on clean energy, environmental quality, and public health in New York. Participants will share lessons learned in past federal responses to Puerto Rico's climate-driven storm devastation, and how clean energy and environmental challenges are further exacerbated due to widespread federal spending cuts to building decarbonization and resiliency programs, public health and social safety nets.

Panelists: Sean Ewart, Deputy Secretary for Energy, Office of Governor Kathy Hochul; NYS DEC Commissioner Amanda Lefton; Doreen M. Harris, President and CEO NYSERDA; Ashley Dougherty, Deputy Secretary for Environment, Office of Governor Kathy Hochul

**Kevin Parker**

Senator

**Kristen Gonzalez**

Senator

**Amy Paulin**

Assemblymember

*1:45pm - 3:00pm | Conference Room 7 - 2nd Floor****You cannot erase us: Health Care Access Challenges and the Impact on Hispanic/Latine Communities in New York and Puerto Rico***

This workshop will discuss healthcare access and the impact on Hispanic/Latine communities in New York State & Puerto Rico. Presenters will review the evolving health care policy environment and its differing effects on queer and trans and gender non-conforming and non-binary New Yorkers and Puerto Ricans. Panelists including the New York AIDS Institute HIV Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) workgroup on Longer Acting HIV Injectables, queer and trans advocates will discuss healthcare disparities that these constituencies are currently experiencing in the face of a hostile Trump administration.

Panelists: Rosy Mota, Latino Commission on AIDS; Lyndel Urbano, Amida Care; Nadia Swanson, Ali Forney Center; Kei Williams, Executive Director at the New Pride Agenda; Wilfred Labiosa, PhD, President at Waves Ahead

**Tony Simone**

Assemblymember

SESSION 3: 1:45PM – 3:00PM



Julia Salazar

Senator

1:45pm - 3:00pm | Conference Room 8 - 2nd Floor
The Power of Property Management in the Community and the Economy

This workshop will discuss property management in two focus points: the importance of property owners understanding how to effectively manage their assets; and the impact that effective property management has on communities. Attendees will gain an understanding of the financial impact that mismanaged properties have in the community, how redlining is still impacting certain communities, and how strong property management can strengthen communities. Each participant will leave empowered and armed with the tools needed to create and maintain wealth while understanding how policy, past and present, has and can affect them.

Panelists: Tywan Anthony, Director of Property Management and Training, Neighborhood Housing Services of New York City; Charlene Gayle, CEO, the Macon Realty, Inc; Chris Bramwell, Managing Partner, CB Emmanuel; Janay Malloy, Regional Vice President, National Association of Real Estate Brokers (NAREB); Tonya Ores, CEO, Neighborhood Housing Services of New York City



Nathalia Fernandez

Senator



Amanda Septimo

Assemblymember

1:45pm - 3:00pm | Conference Room 9 - 2nd Floor
Run. Win. Lead. Next Gen Leaders on Being in Office & How They Got There

Generational change. Everyone’s talking about it, but how do rising young leaders actually become electable and win elected office? Hear from seven of New York’s youngest legislators to find out how they ran, the issues they’re prioritizing, and the work they’re doing to improve the lives of young New Yorkers and all their constituents.

Panelists: Majority Leader / Councilmember Amanda Farias; Mayor of the City of New Rochelle Yadira Ramos-Herbert; Councilmember Pierina Sanchez; Councilmember Justin Sanchez; Jovan Richards, President, New York State Young Democrats; Sophie Secor, Vice President, New York State Young Democrats; Julie Shiroishi, Eleanor’s Legacy Action Fund Executive Director



Gabriella Romero

Assemblymember



Jordan Wright

Assemblymember



Alex Bores

Assemblymember

SESSION 3: 1:45PM – 3:00PM

**Jamaal Bailey**

Senator

1:45pm - 3:00pm | Conference Room 10 - 2nd Floor
Health Inequities: A Human Rights Crisis for the Latino Community

This panel explores the urgent need to recognize health care as a fundamental human right through the lens of the Latino communities in both NY and Puerto Rico. The discussion will address the complex interplay of social determinants of health through the perspectives from government entities, advocates, health practitioners and community leaders at the forefront of the movement to rise to this historical moment where health care resources and protections for historically underserved communities, including Latinos, are being threatened and taken away.

Panelists: Julissa Gutierrez, Chief Diversity Officer, NYS Executive Chamber; Denise Miranda Esq., Commissioner, NYS Division of Human Rights; Helen Arteaga, Chief Executive Officer, NYC Health + Hospitals Elmhurst Hospital; Ann Marie T. Sullivan, MD, Commissioner, Audrey Erazo-Trevino, Assoc. Comr. Co-Dir of the Office of Prevention and Health Initiatives, NYS Office of Mental Health; Tina Kim, Deputy Commissioner, Office of Health Equity and Human Rights NYS Department of Health; Wilfredo Labiosa, PhD, Executive Director Waves Ahead Corp, San Juan, PR; Dr. Adam Aponte, Chief Executive Officer, East Harlem Council for Human Services

**John Zaccaro Jr.**

Assemblymember

1:45pm - 3:00pm | Salon Del Mar A - 2nd Floor
Fostering Innovation and Entrepreneurship in and between NYC and Puerto Rico

This panel will explore innovation and entrepreneurship in NYC and Puerto Rico and how to connect the city with the Island, with a special focus on start-ups and venture capital. Hear from various chamber of commerce leaders address ongoing challenges and new initiatives aiming to develop cultural ties and highlight talent.

Panelists: Thomas J. Grech, President, Queens Chamber of Commerce; Randy Peers, President and CEO, Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce; Lisa Sorin, President, Bronx Chamber of Commerce; Jessica Walker, President and CEO, Manhattan Chamber of Commerce; Brooklyn Borough President, Antonio Reynoso

SESSION 3: 1:45PM – 3:00PM

**Zellnor Myrie**

Senator

1:45pm - 3:00pm | Salon Del Mar B - 2nd Floor
Pathways to Tenant Ownership

This workshop will explore bold, community-led strategies that place tenants at the center of housing justice—transforming renters into stewards and owners of their homes. At a time when displacement and speculative ownership are displacing working-class communities of stability and wealth, new strategies are required. Through pathways like Community Land Trusts (CLTs) and the Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act (TOPA), housing organizers and residents are reimagining what's possible: permanently affordable housing with collective ownership and control. The session will highlight the strengths and distinctions of strategies including CLTs, and TOPA, and how they can work together to create scalable, community-driven solutions.

Panelists: Edward Garcia, President, Bronx Community Land Trust; Albert Scott, Founding Member, East New York Community Land Trust; Sandra Lobo, Executive Director, Northwest Bronx Community & Clergy Coalition; Barika Williams, Executive Director, Association for Neighborhood & Housing Development

**Rodneyse
Bichotte-Hermelyn**

Assemblymember

1:45pm - 3:00pm | Garden Wing Auditorium - 1st Floor
What does the Deployment of ICE and the National Guard mean for Black and Brown Communities?

SESSION 4: 3:15PM - 4:30PM

Flamingo A (2nd Floor)	Culture as Power: How Creatives and Cultural Organizations Are Driving Impact and Change in the Puerto Rican, Latino and African-American Communities <i>Senator Zellnor Myrie and Assemblymember Emérita Torres</i>	Conf. Room 5 (2nd Floor)	Technological Disruptions to the Hispanic Community's Transportation Ecosystem <i>Assemblymember Manny De Los Santos</i>
Flamingo B (2nd Floor)	Breaking Barriers: Advancing Equity and Representation in Law <i>Senator Luis Sepulveda, Assemblymember Catalina Cruz, Assemblymember Alex Bores and Assemblymember Jonathan Rivera</i>	Conf. Room 6 (2nd Floor)	Leading Through Uncertainty: How New York Can Support Babies, Families and Caregivers with HealthySteps and Universal Child Care When Federal Policies Fall Short <i>Assemblymember Yudelka Tapia, Senator Kristen Gonzalez, Senator Cordell Cleare, and Assemblymember Karines Reyes</i>
Flamingo C (2nd Floor)	Education Not Deportation: Empowering Students, Families, and Educators in Today's Climate and Beyond <i>Assemblymember Catalina Cruz and Assemblymember Jessica González-Rojas</i>	Conf. Room 7 (2nd Floor)	Empowering People in an AI World: Education, Equity, and the Future of Work <i>Senator Julia Salazar, Senator Kristen Gonzalez and Assemblymember Alex Bores</i>
Flamingo D (2nd Floor)	Weathering the Storm: Advancing Emergency Preparedness Through Government-University Partnerships <i>Assemblymember Gabriella Romero</i>	Conf. Room 8 (2nd Floor)	Team Up or Lose Out! How Building Coalitions Can Save Public Services <i>Assemblymember Emérita Torres and Senator Zellnor Myrie</i>
Tropical A (2nd Floor)	Community-Centered Language Access Practices and Resources <i>Assemblymember Gabriella Romero</i>	Conf. Room 9 (2nd Floor)	Congestion Relief Works: Early Wins and What's Next <i>Assemblymember Tony Simone and Senator Jeremy Cooney</i>
Tropical B (2nd Floor)	Resilience and Remembrance: Honoring the Latino Legacy of 9/11 <i>Assemblymember Amanda Septimo</i>	Conf. Room 10 (2nd Floor)	Cooperativas de Vivienda: Preserving and Expanding Co-ops and Social Housing from San Juan to NYC <i>Assemblymember Marcela Mitaynes, Senator Brian Kavanagh and Assemblymember Emily Gallagher</i>
Tropical C (2nd Floor)	First to Fight, Next to Lead: Intergenerational Movement Building <i>Assemblymember Steven Raga, Assemblymember Grace Lee and Senator Michael Gianaris</i>	Salon Del Mar A (2nd Floor)	Community Solar from NY to PR: a Recipe for Local Power, Good Jobs and Lower Electricity Bills <i>Senator Jessica Ramos</i>
Conf. Room 3 (2nd Floor)	"The 2030 Census, Research, and our Communities: Why the reliable data matters for all New Yorkers <i>Assemblymember Steven Raga, Assemblymember Michaelle Solages, Assemblymember Landon Dais and Assemblymember David I. Weprin</i>	Salon Del Mar B (2nd Floor)	Advancing Real Solutions for Immigrant Justice: Context, Legislation, and Activism <i>Assemblymember Claire Valdez</i>
Conf. Room 4 (2nd Floor)	Pathways to Promise: Changing the Odds and Building Next Gen Leaders <i>Senator Nathalia Fernandez, Assemblymember Chris Burdick and Assemblymember Dana Leveneg</i>	Garden Wing Auditorium (1st Floor)	Left Behind: A Documentary about the First Public Dyslexic School in New York City <i>Assemblymember Harvey Epstein, Assemblymember JoAnne Simon and Assemblymember Grace Lee</i>

SESSION 4: 3:15PM – 4:30PM

**Zellnor Myrie**

Senator

**Emérita Torres**

Assemblymember

3:15pm - 4:30pm | Flamingo A - 2nd Floor***Culture as Power: How Creatives and Cultural Organizations Are Driving Impact and Change in the Puerto Rican, Latino and African-American Communities***

This timely conversation brings together leaders from NYC and Puerto Rico's arts and culture ecosystems to examine how cultural institutions, artists, and creatives are carrying forward a legacy of impact while actively building new pathways for cultural expression and civic engagement for the future. Panelists will spotlight bold strategies and cross-sector collaborations that are positioning culture at the forefront of social, economic, and political change. We will explore how these efforts have shaped the founding of some of our most beloved institutions but also laying the groundwork for a more expansive and inclusive future across New York, Puerto Rico and beyond.

Panelists: Wes Jackson, BRIC Arts Media; Gonzalo Casals, El Museo del Barrio; Violeta Galagarza, K.R.3TS "KEEP RISING TO THE TOP"; Mino Lora, The People's Theater Project

**Luis Sepulveda**

Senator

**Catalina Cruz**

Assemblymember

3:15pm - 4:30pm | Flamingo B - 2nd Floor***Breaking Barriers: Advancing Equity and Representation in Law***

This panel will explore the challenges and opportunities in creating a more equitable legal and judicial system. From addressing imposter syndrome, faced by underrepresented professionals in the legal field, to advancing judicial reforms that strengthen diversity and representation on the bench, experts will discuss strategies to foster inclusion, dismantle systemic barriers, and ensure that our courts and institutions reflect the communities they serve.

Panelists: Judge Joanne Quiñones, Associate Justice of the Appellate Term for the 2nd, 11th and 13th Judicial Districts and Justice of the Supreme Court, Kings County; Darcel Clark, Bronx County District Attorney; Nick Gjelij, Partner at Gjelij Law PLLC; Judge Betty Lugo, New York City Civil Court, New York County 2nd Municipal Court District; Judge Carmen Velasquez, Supreme Court of the State of New York, Queens County - Civil Term; Miguelina Camilo, Counsel for Assembly Speaker Carl E. Heastie; Coral M. Odiot-Rivera, Partner at Napoli Shkolnik Attorneys at Law

**Alex Bores**

Assemblymember

**Jonathan Rivera**

Assemblymember

SESSION 4: 3:15PM – 4:30PM



**Catalina
Cruz**

Assemblymember



**Jessica
González-Rojas**

Assemblymember

3:15pm - 4:30pm | Flamingo C - 2nd Floor

Education Not Deportation: Empowering Students, Families, and Educators in Today's Climate and Beyond

This panel will examine what educators, community partners, and legislators are doing to keep public schools as safe learning spaces, free from the disruption and displacement threatened by increased immigration enforcement and anti-immigrant rhetoric. Learn about the state of immigration policy, innovative practices and resources to support students and educators, and how to build sustainable and empowering family-school partnerships in New York and Puerto Rico.

Panelists: Randi Weingarten, President, AFT; James Davis, President, Professional Staff Congress; Tamara Alsace, Interim Co-Principal Investigator, CUNY-Initiative on Immigration and Education; NYC Schools Chancellor, Melissa Aviles-Ramos; NeQuan McLean, President of ECC (Education Council Consortium) and CEC 16 President; Daniela Alulema, Project Director, CUNY-Initiative on Immigration and Education; Charlotte Gossett Navarro, Puerto Rico Director, Hispanic Federation; Laura Walsh, Chief Program Officer, Literacy in Community Inc.



Gabriella Romero

Assemblymember

3:15pm - 4:30pm | Flamingo D - 2nd Floor

Weathering the Storm: Advancing Emergency Preparedness Through Government-University Partnerships

This panel will focus on the efforts New York State has taken to partner with the University at Albany in standing up the State's Weather Risk Communication Center (SWRCC). This innovative model draws on the knowledge and expertise of trained meteorologists, atmospheric scientists, and emergency preparedness professionals at the University at Albany, coupled with advanced technology including the NYS Mesonet, a cutting-edge early weather detection network, to provide critical weather-related data and information to New York's senior emergency management personnel before, during, and after a severe weather event.

Panelists: Dr. Havidán Rodríguez, President, University at Albany; Jackie Bray, Commissioner of the NYS Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services; Dr. Chris Thorncroft, Professor and Director of Atmospheric Sciences Research Center; Dr. Nick Bassill, Director, New York State Weather Risk Communication Center

SESSION 4: 3:15PM – 4:30PM

**Gabriella Romero**

Assemblymember

*3:15pm - 4:30pm | Tropical A - 2nd Floor****Community-Centered Language Access Practices and Resources***

In this workshop, panelists will present New York State's strategies for community-centered language access practices, data as it relates to Puerto Rico and New York communities who prefer a language other than English and the importance of inclusive engagement. Attendees will hear directly from state agency leadership, nonprofits and language access advocates on the NYS Language Access Law, practical strategies for engagement, culturally responsive public messaging and publicly available resources.

Panelists: Alejandro Cintron, Executive Director, NYS Office of Language Access (OLA); Felicia Singh, Director of Policy and Government Relations, Coalition for Asian American Children and Families (CACF); Laura Gonzalez-Murphy, Executive Director, NYS Department of State (DOS) Office for New Americans (DOS ONA); Margarita Larios, Chief Belonging Officer, NYS Division of Human Rights (DHR); Taina Wagnac, Director of State and Local Policy, New York Immigration Coalition (NYIC); Teresa Baik, Education Director, Korean Community Services of Metropolitan of New York (KCS); Airenakhue B. Omoragbon, New York Policy Manager at African Communities Together (ACT); Laura Gonzalez-Murphy, Executive Director, NYS Department of State (DOS) Office for New Americans (DOS ONA)

**Amanda Septimo**

Assemblymember

*3:15pm - 4:30pm | Tropical B - 2nd Floor****Resilience and Remembrance: Honoring the Latino Legacy of 9/11***

As the 25th anniversary of 9/11 approaches in 2026, it is important to hear the stories and reflect on the legacy of Puerto Rican victims and the broader Latino community from that tragic day. Honoring the stories of the victims allows us not only to preserve their memories, but also to inspire a new generation with powerful examples of resilience and strength. This panel will spotlight the stories of Puerto Rican and Latino victims of 9/11, while also exploring the broader impact of the Latino community in the context of that day and its aftermath. Additionally, the discussion will highlight how acts of remembrance can serve as tools for healing, unity, and the building of strong, resilient communities.

Panelists: Bill Keegan, Executive Director of Heart 9/11; Dr. Yomaira Figueroa-Vásquez, Director, CUNY CENTRO for Puerto Rican Studies

SESSION 4: 3:15PM – 4:30PM

**Grace Lee**

Assemblymember

**Steven Raga**

Assemblymember

**Michael Gianaris**

Senator

*3:15pm - 4:30pm | Tropical C - 2nd Floor****First to Fight, Next to Lead: Intergenerational Movement Building***

This panel will explore how immigrant and first-generation families have historically built community, created mutual support networks, and laid the foundation for political and civic engagement in the United States. It will examine how cultural values such as faith, family responsibility, and collective well-being shaped their organizing work, and how second and third generations have inherited, adapted, and at times challenged those frameworks to advocate for change in new ways. The panel will close by connecting this legacy to the vital importance of full participation in the upcoming census.

Panelists: John Chin, Dean, CUNY Asian American/Asian Research Institute (AAARI); Dr. Yomaira Figueroa-Vasquez, Director, CUNY CENTRO Puerto Rican Studies; Vanessa Leung, Co-Executive Director, Coalition for Asian American Children and Families; Student, AAARI-CUNY

**Steven Raga**

Assemblymember

**Michaelle Solages**

Assemblymember

*3:15pm - 4:30pm | Conference Room 3 - 2nd Floor****The 2030 Census, Research, and our Communities: Why the reliable data matters for all New Yorkers***

In an era of widespread misinformation and rapidly changing policies, reliable research and thorough data collection have become more important than ever. Thoughtful research focusing on communities of color and immigrants can illuminate critical needs, promote transparency, and encourage civic engagement. However, there is a strong likelihood that a citizenship question will be included in the 2030 Census, and efforts to exclude undocumented individuals from the Census pose additional challenges. This workshop will bring together community leaders, academics, and advocates to explore how the Census, community research, and strong organizing can help prepare New Yorkers for the changing landscape ahead.

Panelists: Murad Awawdeh, Executive Director, New York Immigration Coalition; Distinguished Professor Jeff Wice, New York Law School; Catherine Chen, Executive Director, Asian American Federation; Vanessa Baird-Streeter, President and CEO of the Health and Welfare Council of Long Island; Dr. John J. Chin, Dean of the CUNY Asian American/Asian Research Institute; Amit Singh Bagga, Researcher and former Deputy Secretary/Senior Adviser to the Governor; Eve Stotland, New York Community Trust

**Landon Dais**

Assemblymember

**David I. Weprin**

Assemblymember

SESSION 4: 3:15PM – 4:30PM

**Nathalia Fernandez**

Senator

**Chris Burdick**

Assemblymember

*3:15pm - 4:30pm | Conference Room 4 - 2nd Floor****Pathways to Promise: Changing the Odds and Building Next Gen Leaders***

Underrepresented students are reshaping what higher education looks like and proving what is possible when talent meets opportunity. At a time when systems challenge equity and the value of higher education, college access and success programs do more than open doors—they unlock pathways where students thrive, graduate, and go on to transform families, communities, and industries. Postsecondary achievement is not only an individual milestone; it fuels generational progress and community advancement. Our panelists will explore the barriers that persist, highlight the impact of their programs, and discuss how we can move toward a more equitable education system for all.

Panelists: Shirley Acevedo Buontempo, Founder & Executive Director, Latino U College Access (LUCA); Clara Roman, LUCA Board Member and Volunteer College Coach; Ibeth Alvarracin, LUCA Scholar Class of 2019; LaKisha Williams, Director, #DegreesNYC at Goddard Riverside; Chad Franklin, Associate Vice President, Education Pathways and Director, Options Center at Goddard Riverside; Arlen Benjamin-Gomez, Executive Director, The Education Trust-New York

**Dana Levenberg**

Assemblymember

**Manny
De Los Santos**

Assemblymember

*3:15pm - 4:30pm | Conference Room 5 - 2nd Floor****Technological Disruptions to the Hispanic Community's Transportation Ecosystem***

This SOMOS panel will provide a timely platform to discuss the pros and cons of autonomous vehicles, leaning on industry experts and members of the community who may be affected by the technology. Legislators, staff, and members of the community will have a greater understanding of the implications of autonomous vehicles on the Hispanic community and greater City of New York.

Panelists: Cira Angeles, Spokesperson, Livery Base Owners Association; Jose Altamirano, President, Livery Base Owners Association; Ira Goldstein, Executive Director, The Black Car Fund; Josh Gold, Policy Director, UBER; Avik Kabessa, President, Livery Roundtable; Michele Dottin, Organizer, Independent Drivers Guild

SESSION 4: 3:15PM – 4:30PM

**Yudelka Tapia**

Assemblymember

**Kristen Gonzalez**

Senator

*3:15pm - 4:30pm | Conference Room 6 - 2nd Floor****Leading Through Uncertainty: How New York Can Support Babies, Families and Caregivers with HealthySteps and Universal Child Care When Federal Policies Fall Short***

Critical anti-poverty programs for children and families are under threat due to deep federal cuts to Medicaid, SNAP, and other safety net programs, which will strain state budgets, including state investments in health care and early childhood education. These programs play a vital role in the long-term development of healthy babies and toddlers. Two critical family centered programs that must be preserved and indeed expanded are HealthySteps and New York's child care system. This panel will focus on how New York and Puerto Rico can create sound policy and to preserve and expand HealthySteps in New York and New York's early childhood education system.

Panelists: Nathan Berger, Program & Policy Officer, The Robin Hood Foundation; Lauren Melodia, Director of Economic & Fiscal Policy, Center New York City Affairs; Janet Betancourt Cruz, Vice President Head Start and Early Head Start, NY Foundling; Vanessa Salcedo, MD, MPH, Vice President of Pediatrics and Health Promotion, Union Community Health Center; Rose Duhan, President and Chief Executive Officer, Community Health Care Association of New York State (CHCANYS); Elizabeth Frenette, Senior Health Policy Expert, HealthySteps a program of ZERO TO THREE; Representative, ECE on the Move; Mitchell Netburn J.D, President and CEO, Samaritan Daytop Village

**Cordell Cleare**

Senator

**Karines Reyes**

Assemblymember

**Julia Salazar**

Senator

**Kristen Gonzalez**

Senator

*3:15pm - 4:30pm | Conference Room 7 - 2nd Floor****Empowering People in an AI World: Education, Equity, and the Future of Work***

While the sector-specific impacts of AI remain murky, AI is poised to completely transform human labor, and in turn, the entire economy. As we prepare society for this transformation through educational and workforce development programs, this panel will explore how to design programs that directly support workers by preparing members of society "from K to gray" (i.e., from primary through elderly) for an AI world through AI literacy programs that focus on the workings and risks of AI, as well as job transformation through foundational AI computer science education and re/upskilling. We will also discuss how to empower communities to defend their rights (in IP and otherwise) and cultural heritage from AI-fueled homogenization and erasure.

Panelists: Kermitt Brooks, Chief Legal Officer, The Guardian Life Insurance Company; Wayne Spence, President, Public Employees Federation; Dru Rai, New York State Chief Information Officer; Matthew Fraser, Chief Technology Officer (CTO) of the Office of Technology & Innovation (OTI); Virginia Maloney, Incoming City Councilmember; Danny Weiss, Chief Advocacy Officer, Common Sense Media

**Alex Bores**

Assemblymember

SESSION 4: 3:15PM – 4:30PM

**Emérita Torres**

Assemblymember

**Zellnor Myrie**

Senator

3:15pm - 4:30pm | Conference Room 8 - 2nd Floor
Team Up or Lose Out! How Building Coalitions Can Save Public Services

This year, President Donald Trump signed into law a massive budget bill that slashes the American social safety net and cripples healthcare and food assistance. This workshop explores the critical role of coalitions to defend and strengthen public services now under attack, such as Medicaid, the Affordable Care Act, SNAP, school lunch and afterschool programming. Diverse groups, such as labor unions, nonprofits, advocates, and individuals can unite around shared goals to collectively support their communities and advance equity.

Panelists: Marcelle Dinnall, Healthcare Advocate, Southeast Queens, Healthcare Education Project; Asim Johnson, Healthcare Advocate, Syracuse, Healthcare Education Project; Mark Hannay, Director, Metro NY Health Care for All; Rachel Sabella, Director, No Kid Hungry; Sheila Duke, Chief Executive Officer, Roads to Success

**Tony Simone**

Assemblymember

**Jeremy Cooney**

Senator

3:15pm - 4:30pm | Conference Room 9 - 2nd Floor
Congestion Relief Works: Early Wins and What's Next

New York's vast transit network is the most equitable and affordable way to travel around the region, used by nearly 90% of commuters into the Central Business District. But for decades, underinvestment led to degraded service, unsafe conditions, and polluted air that hit Latino communities disproportionately hard, manifesting in higher asthma rates, unsafe pedestrian conditions, and limited access to reliable transit – along with lower rates of automobile ownership, further limiting transportation options. Enter congestion pricing: a bold policy to reduce traffic, make streets safer, and fund modern, reliable transit. This workshop will spotlight how congestion relief is not only transforming daily life for millions of working New Yorkers, but also advancing equity and resilience in Latino communities.

Panelists: Julie Tighe, President, New York League of Conservation Voters; Lisa Daglian, Executive Director, Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA; David Do, Chair and Commissioner, New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission; Carlo A. Scissura, Esq., President and CEO, New York Building Congress; Mayra Aldás-Deckert, Lead Organizer, Riders Alliance; Quemuel Arroyo, Chief Accessibility Officer, MTA

SESSION 4: 3:15PM – 4:30PM

**Marcela Mitaynes**

Assemblymember

**Brian Kavanagh**

Senator

**Emily Gallagher**

Assemblymember

*3:15pm - 4:30pm | Conference Room 10 - 2nd Floor****Cooperativas de Vivienda: Preserving and Expanding Co-ops and Social Housing from San Juan to NYC***

New York State and Puerto Rico both face deepening affordable housing crises. Both have strong legacies of cooperative and social housing development. In New York, Puerto Rican and Latino tenants have long been at the forefront of grassroots cooperative development—converting abandoned buildings into social housing, stabilizing their communities in Nuyorican neighborhoods like Los Sures/South Williamsburg and Loisaida/Lower East Side. Our panel will explore the preservation and expansion of cooperatives and other forms of social housing in New York State and Puerto Rico. We will examine strategies to preserve existing affordable cooperatives, including Mitchell-Lamas and HDFCs in New York.

Panelists: Christie Peale, CEO and ED of the Center for NYC Neighborhoods (CNYCN); Rolando Guzman, Deputy Director, Community Preservation, St. Nicks Alliance; Iziah Thompson, Senior Policy Analyst, Community Service Society of New York; Oksana Mironova, Senior Policy Analyst, Community Service Society of New York; Renette Bradley, Tenant Leader, HOPE Tenant Union; Arielle Hersh, Director of Policy and New Projects at UHAB; Juan Sabathie, Executive Director of Instituto para el Desarrollo Socioeconómico y de Vivienda de Puerto Rico (INDESIVI)

**Jessica Ramos**

Senator

*3:15pm - 4:30pm | Salon Del Mar A - 2nd Floor****Community Solar from NY to PR: a Recipe for Local Power, Good Jobs and Lower Electricity Bills***

In July 2025, the Puerto Rico Energy Bureau initiated a proceeding to establish a community solar framework and launch a 25 megawatt low-income community solar pilot program. Community solar is a promising approach to solar deployment that expands access to low-cost solar power among renters and others who face barriers to adoption. As Puerto Rican stakeholders embark on this effort, they can apply best-practices and lessons-learned from New York. New York's community solar program is the largest in the nation, and currently delivers utility bill savings to hundreds of thousands of families.

Panelists: Doreen Harris, President and CEO, NYSERDA; Ferdinand Ramos, Commissioner, Puerto Rico Energy Bureau; Noah Ginsburg, Executive Director, New York Solar Energy Industries Association; PJ Wilson, Executive Director, Solar and Energy Storage Association of Puerto Rico; Ahmad Perez, Infrastructure Coordinator, UPROSE

SESSION 4: 3:15PM – 4:30PM



Claire Valdez

Assemblymember

3:15pm - 4:30pm | Salon Del Mar B - 2nd Floor
Advancing Real Solutions for Immigrant Justice: Context, Legislation, and Activism

Between January and August 2025, the breadth of attacks on immigrants and on democracy itself has been without precedent in U.S. history. In New York City alone, more than 2,400 people attending routine, court-mandated hearings have been swept into expedited deportation proceedings. Panelists will share practical tools, legislative solutions, and effective messaging approaches that can be used to fight back against escalating enforcement and to build broad-based support for policies grounded in compassion and inclusion.

Panelists: Murad Awawdeh, President and CEO, New York Immigration Coalition; Alexa Avilés, New York City Council Member, 38th District; Kelsey Pirnak, Vera Institute of Justice, Advocacy Manager; Andrea Vásquez, Professional Staff Congress/CUNY, Secretary; Rosa Cohen-Cruz, The Bronx Defenders, Director of Immigration Policy



Harvey Epstein

Assemblymember



JoAnne Simon

Assemblymember

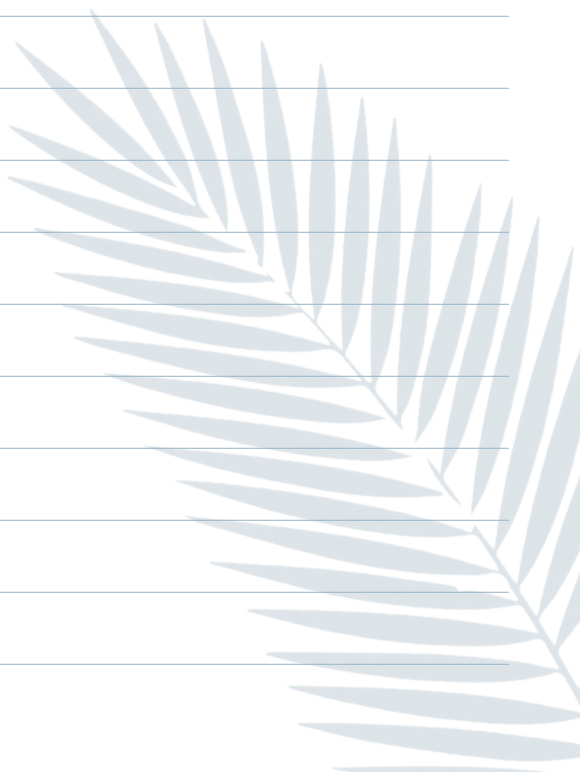
3:15pm - 4:30pm | Garden Wing Auditorium - 1st Floor
Left Behind: A Documentary about the First Public Dyslexic School in New York City



Grace Lee

Assemblymember

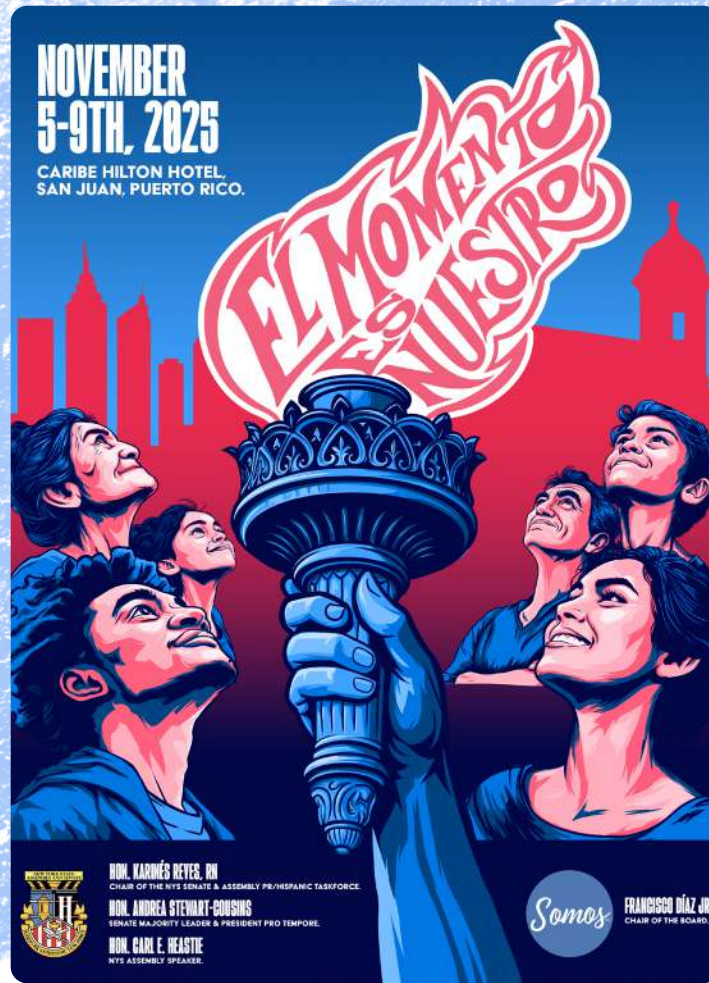
NOTES



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Meet the artist!



@ANGURRIA 

@EVARISTO ANGURRIA 

ANGURRIA

Omar García, widely known as Angurria, is a talented Dominican artist with a rich and diverse career spanning 25 years in the realms of illustration, art direction, and graphic muralism. His career took off in 2004 when he joined Young & Rubicam, the leading advertising agency in the Dominican Republic at the time, where he earned the moniker «Evaristo Angurria.» Since then, he has experienced a continuous wave of growth and exploring his passion for mural art. Internationally, Angurria has made his mark at mural festivals and projects around the world including Ecuador, Puerto Rico and Dominican Republic.



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