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STATE OF ILLINOIS CELEBRATES LATINO BUSINESSES DURING NATIONAL “SUPPORT LATINO BUSINESS DAY”

In anticipation of Hispanic Heritage Month 2021, Pritzker administration launches first-ever statewide day of appreciation for Latino business owners across the state

ROCKFORD, Il. – The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) today joined business leaders in Rockford to celebrate national “Support Latino Business Day,” and encouraged residents to support Latino and Hispanic businesses throughout the state during this year’s Hispanic Heritage Month, which begins tomorrow. Festivities include an official proclamation from Governor Pritzker recognizing the inaugural Support Latino Business Day during the grand opening of the Rockford Regional Hispanic Chamber.

For this year’s Hispanic Heritage Month – DCEO is teaming up with industry organizations, chambers of commerce, civic groups, and small business owners to host a series of events focused on honoring the Latino business legacy, supporting their recovery from COVID-19, and connecting new and existing business owners with state resources to help them grow and thrive.

“Illinois is the first state to recognize National Support Latino Business Day, a time for Illinoisans in every community across the state to recognize Latino owned businesses and their contributions to the state’s economy,” said Governor JB Pritzker. “My administration has committed to supporting new business owners and making sure they have the resources needed to thrive and create new jobs throughout the state. During National Support Latino Business Day, Hispanic Heritage Month and throughout the year, I encourage all Illinoisans to join me in supporting Latino businesses and celebrating the invaluable contributions they provide to the state.”

DCEO is leading the charge to encourage Illinoisans to “Support Latino Businesses,” by offering various initiatives through DCEO’s Office of Tourism including two detailed itineraries supporting iconic cultural Latino businesses and attractions and online by utilizing the Groupon website and services. As part of the inaugural recognition of Support Latino Business Day and monthlong HHM celebration, DCEO and several organizations will host a series of events, exploring resources available to support businesses, and to help businesses navigate the pandemic and look ahead toward recovery.

“As the first Latina to lead the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, I’m proud to recognize the significant economic contributions of Latino businesses and entrepreneurs throughout Illinois and celebrate the first-ever statewide Support Latino Business Day,” said Acting Director of DCEO, Sylvia Garcia. “During
Hispanic Heritage Month, and every day of the year, we at DCEO are focused on delivering resources that will remove systemic barriers and ensure all Illinois small businesses have an equal shot at economic success.”

All events are free to attend, and information and registration can be found on the DCEO website:

- **Sept 17th** Facebook Live (en español): Recursos de DCEO para pequeñas empresas
  Recursos disponibles de DCEO que le puede ayudar su negocio como ayuda financiera y asistencia técnica. 
  Link: DCEO Facebook Live @illinoisdceo

- **Sept 21st** Through the DCEO Office of Film and OMEE presents in collaboration with Mezcla Media Collective Nuestra Historia: A Panel with Latinx Women in Film. Latinx women in film lack representation. According to the report titled Latinos in Film: Erasure on Screen & Behind the Camera Across 1,200 Popular Movies, across the 100 top grossing movies from 2007-2018, only 3% of films featured leads or co leads with Latino actors. [https://bit.ly/3l8H1CS](https://bit.ly/3l8H1CS)

- **Sept 24th** DCEO Resources for Small Businesses 
  Presented by DCEO a workshop for business owners to learn more about the State's expansive business development center network – one of the largest in the nation with over 40 SBDCs, 9 PTACs, 9 ITCs. During this panel, business owners can learn how these community centers which are available on a year-round basis can support technical assistance and financial resources available from DCEO. Facebook Live @illinoisdceo

- **Sept 28th** DCEO and Groupon Present: Tips and Resources for Funding Your Business is teaming up with Groupon and Small Business Administration, Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) community leaders to host a conversation with leaders in business for a discussion on available financial resources and tips for obtaining funding for your business.

- **Sept 30th** Acceso a la Capital para Empresas Latinx
  Una discusión sobre recursos financieros disponible para su negocio, como subvenciones (ayudar que no tiene que devolver) y préstamos. Los presentadores incluyen: LULAC, Self-Help Federal Credit Union, SOMERCOR, Allies for Community Business Link: [https://illinois.webex.com/illinois/j.php?RGID=r3f07f03b2f4b80780452179817eefbab](https://illinois.webex.com/illinois/j.php?RGID=r3f07f03b2f4b80780452179817eefbab)

- **Oct 5th** Apprenticeships: Benefits for Businesses and Job Seekers
  Join this discussion on apprenticeship programs and how to utilize those programs to assist your business and/or your career journey. Speakers include: Hispanic American Construction Industry Association (HACIA), DCEO’s Illinois Works, and Advanced Contractor’s Solutions Inc. 
  Link: [https://illinois.webex.com/illinois/j.php?RGID=r777ef6bc79cf62e182913ab5ecadcd6](https://illinois.webex.com/illinois/j.php?RGID=r777ef6bc79cf62e182913ab5ecadcd6)

- Through the DCEO Office of Tourism, residents can access two exclusive road trips where you can support businesses and the Latino culture by while exploring Illinois in From the Quad Cities to Peoria and Rockford to Chicago, exciting opportunities await to enjoy Illinois
  - Peoria-Quad Cities
  - Chicago-Rockford

Illinois is home to roughly 112,000 Latino owned business, accounting for 10 percent of business owners with employees across the state, not including sole proprietors. Illinois’ cultural identity, legacy as a hub for innovation and entrepreneurship and its current and future economic success are directly tied to the health of this community.
Studies consistently show that Latino businesses in Illinois and nationwide have long faced barriers to accessing capital, including PPP funds launched last year.

In recognition of the difficult toll COVID-19 has placed on Latino businesses, the Pritzker administration and DCEO have taken deliberate steps to ensure all economic relief programs can be made available to Latino and minority communities across the state. As a result – DCEO has seen record outcomes with small business grant programs – with over 40 percent of grants provided to minority businesses through the Business Interruption Grants (BIG) program earlier this year, which deployed $290 million in relief via 9,000 business grants made.

The State of Illinois continues to address the ongoing needs facing small businesses owners across its communities. Currently, $250 million is available through the Back to Business (B2B) grants program. To ensure Latino and other hard to reach communities have a fair shot at accessing these funds, DCEO has deployed over 100 community navigators who are working statewide to conduct outreach and provide assistance for businesses facing barriers – whether due to language, technology, tax prep, or otherwise. Additionally, the program is accessible to those businesses with ITIN. To find a navigator or resources near you – please visit DCEO’s website.

“We are proud to serve in the State of Illinois Community Navigators program – where we are leading outreach efforts to ensure Hispanic owned businesses have an opportunity to apply for the Back to Business grant,” said Jaime di Paulo, President, of IHCC. “Businesses have traditionally had adverse economic conditions even before the pandemic – we know the importance of promoting programs to Hispanic/Latino business owners through our networks. We thank Governor Pritzker for continuing to prioritize the needs of our business owners throughout the pandemic and as we move toward the path to economic recovery.”

“Today we celebrate our grand opening of the Rockford Regional Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, an opening of equal business opportunities for all. We are grateful and honored to receive from the state of Illinois, the first state endorsement as “Support Latino Business day,” said Sully Cadengo, President of the Rockford Regional Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. “We might come from different places and speak a different language, but today we speak a common language, a language of respect and collaborative inclusion to help our Latino community start, develop, and grow their businesses.”

“During Hispanic Heritage Month, we celebrate the achievements of Latinos and the contribution made to this state, by sharing our stories and successes today and throughout the year,” said Letty Velez National Education Subcommittee Innovation Vice Chair of League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC). “As the largest minority group, we are starting businesses at a record pace, thank you Governor Pritzker for ensuring minority businesses have access to business recovery programs like Back to Business.”

The State’s Hispanic Heritage Month activities are presented by the Illinois Office of Minority Economic Empowerment (OMEE) and Regional Economic Development (RED), located within DCEO. OMEE plays a crucial role in providing support to minority owned businesses of all sizes and types, including connection with grants, technical assistance, and incentives to bolster minority entrepreneurs and minority-owned enterprises.

For more information on this year’s Hispanic Heritage Month events planned for businesses, please contact Diana Alfaro, Latinx Business Development Manager, at diana.alfaro@illinois.gov. To learn more about ongoing resources and programs for small businesses, follow DCEO on social media @IllinoisDCEO, visit our website at dceo.illinois.gov, or sign up to receive the newsletter.

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