



October 1, 2009

Milwaukee Common Council Members
City Hall
200 East Wells Street
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53202

Re: File 090411

Dear President Hines & Members of the Common Council:

Since its founding in 1972, the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Wisconsin (HCCW) has adhered to its primary mission of the development and growth of Hispanic-owned businesses in Milwaukee and indeed, throughout Wisconsin. The HCCW has fostered business development and has diligently advocated on behalf of our small business enterprises.

We have earned and we maintain a remarkable record of consistently and successfully assisting Hispanic-owned businesses flourish. These businesses in turn, spur vital economic development in this community, create jobs and directly add to the city's tax base.

The purpose of this letter is to express our significant concern and extreme alarm over Common Council File 090411, a proposed ordinance that would require the city to add - at its own expense- a new layer of bureaucracy that would target immigrants by requiring them to verify their legal status before receiving business and/or commercial licenses and permits.

On behalf of our membership and thousands who look to the HCCW for leadership, I implore you to weigh heavily the likely disproportionate and negative impact implementation that said ordinance would have on numerous potential and existing Hispanic entrepreneurs and Hispanic-owned businesses in Metropolitan Milwaukee; not to mention on the city's economic development efforts.

At a minimum, the detrimental effect of this ordinance on Milwaukee and Wisconsin businesses deserves more studied and far-reaching consideration than the short-sighted, mean-spirited treatment it has received thus far. **Research shows that no other city where large concentrations of immigrant Hispanic population reside has enacted such a devastating blow to this particular demographic.**

Immigrants have helped to fuel the economic boom of the 1990s and their talents form part of the bedrock of the 21st century American economy. What's more, laws governing immigration matters are at best outdated, and at worst are being leveraged to advance short-sighted political agendas by specifically targeting the immigrant community at the expense of endangering our own economic recovery.

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More importantly, to pass such an ordinance is totally unnecessary. According to Attorney General J.B. Van Hollen, state government is not required by federal law to verify the legal status of persons applying for business and/or commercial licenses. "Federal law does not dictate what the states must do to insure that applicants for state public benefits are lawfully present in this country..." Van Hollen states in his letter of October 25, 2007.

At a time of economic recession, when storefronts throughout this city remain vacant along major commercial corridors, when tens of thousands of residents are unemployed, it is utterly self defeating that you would now consider this ordinance. We should not make it any more cumbersome for entrepreneurs to obtain business and commercial licenses in the City of Milwaukee. We should not jeopardize our own economic recovery. Based on this city's long history of immigrant entrepreneurship, we should not alienate and target immigrants who only want to contribute to our economic well being.

Rather than impede the economic growth of this city and alienating potential entrepreneurs from investing in new enterprises that would create additional tax revenue and more jobs, it is important, now more than ever, that policy makers create a fertile environment that values, rather than hampers entrepreneurship.

In our new economy, Hispanics are no longer just employees and consumers, we are employers and investors who are woven into every fiber of the area's economy. The Hispanic community- and I specifically refer to immigrants and their offspring -are a crucial component of the revitalization of the local economy. No one can doubt the deeply rooted entrepreneurial spirit and committed work ethic that is inherently part of our rich Hispanic culture. In fact, Hispanics are the fastest growing group of entrepreneurs today.

Our governmental agencies have stubbornly failed to offer a common sense solution to the immigration issue and in doing so have worsened the scenario for employers, workers, consumers and business owners. In the history of this great nation, many of our immigrant forefathers weathered seemingly impossible odds to achieve the American Dream. Today we Hispanics continue their vision in pursuit of that dream, and do so while contributing to the area's growth and economy.

The HCCW and the community we represent oppose Common Council File 090411 on the basis that it is unnecessary; it is potentially detrimental to the economic revitalization of the City of Milwaukee; it would make it difficult if not impossible for entrepreneurs to acquire needed licenses; and it goes to extremes to target Hispanic entrepreneurs who only want to invest in our great city and state.

We respectfully urge you to oppose implementation of the ordinance. Your attention and the opportunity to comment on this most recent anti-immigrant development are appreciated. Gracias!

Sincerely,



Maria Monreal-Cameron, President & CEO
Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Wisconsin

Cc: HCCW Board

Mayor Tom Barrett

Oscar Tovar – Office of the Governor

County Executive Scott Walker

Representative Pedro Colon

Rebeca Lopez – Office of U.S. Senator Feingold

Joanne Anton- Office of U.S. Senator Herb Kohl

Jessica Cavazos – Office of Congresswoman Gwen Moore

Hispanic Community-based organizations

Hispanic Media