



## Resolution #190421- PHL Neighborhood Growth Strategy

Philadelphia City Council Subcommittee of Commerce & Economic Development

Testimony of Jennifer Rodriguez, MCP, President & CEO, Greater Philadelphia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce  
November 26, 2019

Good morning. Thank you for hosting today's hearing on how to foster inclusive growth in Philadelphia.

I am Jennifer Rodríguez, President & CEO of the Greater Philadelphia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. For almost three decades, GPHCC has been the leading voice developing, promoting and advocating for Hispanic businesses in the Greater Philadelphia Region, while encouraging the advancement and economic growth of the Hispanic community.

Like the others on this panel, I believe that the intractable, intergenerational poverty that we see across the city is the greatest threat we face, but more specifically, it is the greatest threat that the Hispanic community faces. The fact is, that at 38%, Hispanics are the poorest demographic in Philadelphia.

There is ample evidence that an increase in family-sustaining jobs would have the greatest impact on poverty, but jobs cannot be created on demand. They will not appear just because we wish them to. Jobs are not the input that creates a vibrant economy, on the contrary, jobs are the outcome. Job creation requires a favorable environment for business growth.

The fact remains, small businesses continue to be the greatest source of employment growth. It is also true that most new jobs are not created by large corporations like Amazon, Facebook or Wework. Most new jobs are created incrementally, the old-fashioned way, by small businesses with fewer than 250 employees. In other words,

Philadelphia's job creators are the construction firms, coffee roasters, auto repair shops, restaurants and grocers located in our neighborhoods, and increasingly, those creating jobs are Latino entrepreneurs.

If job creation is one of the keys to lifting the city out of poverty and if small businesses are the true engine of growth in our economy, then, we should be hyper-focused on helping them succeed. Latinos, for example, are starting businesses at three times the rate of the general population and there are over 11,000 Hispanic businesses in the city. If they were to grow modestly, by one or two employees, we could add thousands of new jobs in the neighborhoods that need them most. It costs our communities when minority-owned businesses don't scale up.

At GPHCC we are committed to eliminating the structural poverty that hampers the growth and development of our City and we have joined the Philadelphia Neighborhood Growth Project, because the work ahead is much greater and more complex than one single entity has the power and capacity to address. It requires a shared voice and collective action.

As business leaders, as community leaders, and as residents of this city we should not be satisfied until every neighborhood, every family, every resident and every child, feels they have equal opportunity to share in Philadelphia's prosperity. That's why an inclusive, pro-growth agenda is so important.

Thank you for holding today's hearing about this crucial topic. The leaders, staff and members of the Greater Philadelphia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce are ready to work with you to build a stronger Philadelphia for all.