

Dear Election Board;

February 22, 2022

The 2020 census showed that Latinos now make up a large majority, 64% of the population residing in the city of Hazleton. Hazleton also saw the most growth of any city in Luzerne County with an 18.2% increase in population. This recent growth clearly indicates the number of registered Latino voters will keep growing.

Luzerne County is to be commended for offering the ballot in both English and Spanish since 2012 even though the population of Hazleton was not nearly as high as it is now. Any change to that policy now, while the population is steadily increasing, would be both inconsistent and counterproductive to the responsibility of county government. The role of government at all levels is to make sure every voting citizen has the opportunity to participate in the selection of their government. Eliminating the dual language ballot now will only serve as an unnecessary barrier to voting overall and make it more difficult for Spanish speaking voters to cast their votes.

We support the position of keeping the ballots bilingual, as it has been for the past 10 years to ensure the right to vote is accessible and fair for all citizens. The right to vote is essential to a well-functioning democracy. We also encourage the county to make Spanish interpreters available at appropriate polls. Fair and open elections are the lifeblood of a healthy democracy, and in that spirit, we are asking you to make these reasonable accommodations for our citizens whose native language is Spanish.

Sincerely

Elaine Maddon Curry, Chairwoman, Hazleton Advisory Council of Pa. Human Relations Commission (PHRC)

Francisco Torres, Member Hazleton Advisory Council PHRC, Governor's Advisory Commission on Latino Affairs (GACLA)