



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**CONTACT 1:** Leo Morales 206-685-2489  
**CONTACT 2:** Antoinette Angulo 206-422-4589

## **State legislature funds Latino Center for Health to conduct state-wide Latinx physician supply study**

**University of Washington, Seattle:** The Latino Center for Health is pleased to announce Washington state legislative funding in the amount of \$150,000 for the center to conduct a study that identifies the number of Latinx physicians across the state and describes their practice areas and geographic locations. An additional goal of the study is to develop and disseminate policy recommendations to meet the state's growing need for Latinx physicians. The Latino Center for Health is an interdisciplinary center with faculty members from the UW School of Social Work, UW School of Public Health and UW School of Medicine.

Latinx are the largest and among the fastest growing racial/ethnic group in the state of Washington. Between 1980 and 2018, the Latinx population grew from 1.9 percent to 13.1 percent and in 2018, there were nearly a million Latinx living in Washington.<sup>1</sup>

A number of social- and health-related inequities affect Washington Latinx, including<sup>2,3</sup> a lack of access to linguistically and culturally appropriate health services and a scarcity of bilingual/bicultural service providers.<sup>4</sup> Other concerns include lack of affordable housing, food insecurity, lack of access to mental health providers and a hostile political environment for immigrants.

"There is an urgent need to address the shortage of Latinx physicians and other physicians of color in Washington state and the nation," says Dr. Leo Morales, principal investigator of this study, chief diversity officer of the UW School of Medicine, and co-director of the Latino Center for Health. "If current trends continue, the gap between the size of communities of color and the number of physicians of color serving them is only going to increase over the next decade and beyond. This study will create a profile of Latinx physicians in the state and derive policy prescriptions to address the growing shortage."

This study's results and policy recommendations will be disseminated through a final report to be presented at a one-day **Latinx Health Symposium** held at the University of Washington in September 2020. The symposium will include guest speakers, policy makers, university leadership, community leaders and advocates, and representatives from the UW's six health sciences schools—dentistry, medicine, nursing, pharmacy, public health, and social work—with breakout sessions to identify strategic policy and educational efforts to create positive change.

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1 U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

2 University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute. County Health Rankings 2018.

3 Heron M. Deaths: Leading causes for 2016. National Vital Statistics Reports; vol. 67 no. 6. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. 2018.

4 Personal communication prepared by the Latino Center for Health for Senator Rebecca Saldaña, October 2018.