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## A depression for Latinos

The economic recession is feeling more like a depression for Latinos in New York. But there are gaps that the city can and must fill to help families at the margins.

Today, the Community Service Society (CSS) releases the results of a survey conducted over the summer that show how economic conditions for Latinos have gone from bad to worse. Among the findings:

- More than 1 in 4 Latinos lost their jobs. More than 4 in 10 low-income Latinos either had their hours, wages, and/or tips reduced, or lost their jobs—or both—in the past year.

- Low-income Latinos are more likely than Whites or Blacks to frequently worry about having enough money to cover expenses and bills. Latinos are more likely to worry about housing as well.

- Low income Latinos are more likely to have multiple workers in their household, but less likely to report that they have employer sponsored benefits;

- For moderate to higher income Latino families, one in five fell behind in housing payments, and over a third had their health care costs increase;

- Latina and Black low-income working mothers are most worried about not being able to find or keep a job.

Non union status, a shortage of English as Second Language classes and the failure thus far to enact immigration reform make Latinos especially vulnerable in this economic climate.

But the adequacy or inadequacy of city policies and responses play a critical role in all of this. The years of delay in effectively addressing day laborers, the resistance to a mandated pay increase for home-based child care workers and the lack of rallying by Mayor Bloomberg in Albany for the rights of domestic workers have not helped low-income families.

More recent moves are not inspiring confidence. The Bloomberg administration is trying to lay off hundreds of public school aides—a measure a judge this week described as disproportionately affecting poor communities.

Clearly, one common sense approach to poverty is to not drive workers at the bottom rungs of this city into it. Vulnerable New Yorkers should be at the forefront of the city's agenda.

Another is to help them address urgent needs.

For example, with half of the people who aren't receiving food stamps unaware that they are even eligible, the administration should be marshalling all forces to enroll the working and jobless poor. And with 72 percent of low income Latino workers without paid sick leave, City Council Speaker Christine Quinn must push for passage of the Paid Sick Time Act.

These are two of the lifelines that New Yorkers must press city leaders for.

<http://www.impre.com/eldiariony/opinion/2009/10/29/a-depression-for-latinos-156297-1.html>