

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 24, 2019

Charles H. Rivkin
Chairman and CEO
Motion Picture Association of America
1301 K St. NW, Suite 900E
Washington, D.C. 20005

Dear Chairman Rivkin,

Thank you for requesting to brief Members of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus (CHC) on the Motion Picture Association of America's (MPAA) efforts to increase diversity in the film industry. As discussed in the briefing, Caucus Members were particularly concerned about the lack of Latino and Latina representation both behind and in front of the camera. To that end, we hope that you can provide in writing, specific details on your outreach, teaching and training of best practice efforts, and overall strategy to increase Hispanic representation in the film and television industry.

The MPAA represents some of the world's biggest studios in the television and film industries. Its collective creative content output and ability to tell and distribute stories through movies and television programming have helped shape American culture for nearly a century. Because of this, the industry has played a role in how women and people of color are perceived in America. Therefore, the MPAA and its affiliated studios have an ethical responsibility to viewers to create content that reflects the rich mosaic of American life, including stories created, told, and portrayed by Latino Americans.

Your own research demonstrates that in 2018, Latino audiences had the highest annual attendance of any racial/ethnic group per capita, going to the cinema an average of 4.7 times in the year.¹ In fact, they are disproportionately represented in the percentage of movie tickets purchased versus their overall population in the United States,² a fact that has remained consistent since 2012. In 2018, Latinos and Latinas represented 24 percent of frequent moviegoers – individuals who go to the cinema once a month or more. Frequent moviegoers also happen to account for almost half of box office sales, signaling that Latinos and Latinas are among the most loyal customers to the film industry in America. Yet, Latinos and Latinas continue to be the most underrepresented group both in front and behind the camera when compared to their overall population.

A study of the 1,100 most popular films between 2007 and 2017 performed by researchers at the University of Southern California³ found that on average Latinos/as only represented 4.5 percent of all speaking characters,

¹ Motion Picture Association of America (2018) *Theatrical and Home Entertainment Market Environment report*. Accessed online at <https://www.mpa.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/MPAA-THEME-Report-2018.pdf>

² Ibid.

³ Smith, S. L., Choueiti, M., Pieper, K., Case, A. & Choi, A. (2018) *Inequality in 1,100 popular films: Examining portrayals of gender, race/ethnicity, LGBT & disability from 2007 to 2017*. USC Annenberg Inclusion Initiative. Accessed online at <http://assets.uscannenberg.org/docs/inequality-in-1100-popular-films.pdf>

with a low of 2.8 percent in 2009 and a high of 6.2 percent in 2017. Other studies have found that even as the number of roles for Latinos and Latinas have increased, so have their portrayals in negative stereotypes.⁴

We are living in particularly dangerous times for Latinos and Latinas in the United States, where our communities face a near constant flow of politically charged anti-immigrant rhetoric. Such circumstances only underscore the urgent need for the MPAA to increase Latino and Latino representation in the film and television industry. As such, please provide the Congressional Hispanic Caucus with the following:

- What role, if any, does the MPAA play in promoting diversity and inclusion among the various studios it represents?
- What role, if any, does the MPAA play in reducing harmful stereotypes of Latinos and Latinas in the film and television industry?
- How are qualified Latino and Latina showrunners, writers, directors, producers and actors sourced for new and/or existing film projects?
- Does the MPAA have a list of best practices studios can follow to increase diversity and inclusion among the studios it represents? Please provide a copy of those best practices.
- What outreach initiatives has the MPAA conducted to specifically target Latino and Latina film students in the United States? Please provide a list of the events and film schools visited.
- Please provide a list of community partners and the contributions made to each group that the MPAA and its affiliate studios work with to increase Latino and Latina representation in the film and television industry?
- How many of the studios that MPAA represents, have a Latino/a diversity and inclusion officer directly charged with addressing Hispanic under representation in front of and behind the camera? Please provide a complete contact list of diversity and inclusion officers by Studio.

We look forward to working with the Motion Picture Association of America and its affiliated studios to help increase the Latino and Latina representation in the film and television industry and to your prompt responses to our inquiry.

Sincerely,



Robert Menéndez
United States Senator
Congressional Hispanic Caucus
Diversity and Inclusion Taskforce
Co-Chair

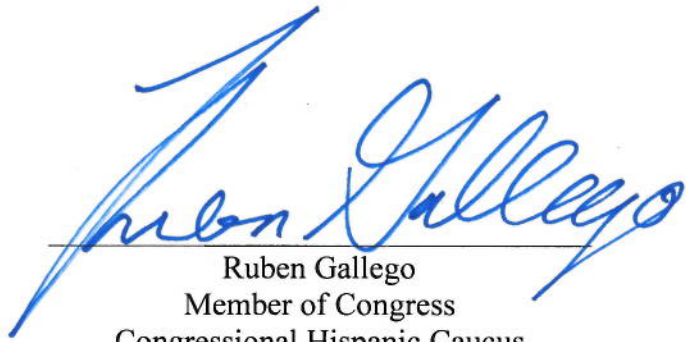


Tony Cárdenas
Member of Congress
Congressional Hispanic Caucus
Diversity and Inclusion Taskforce
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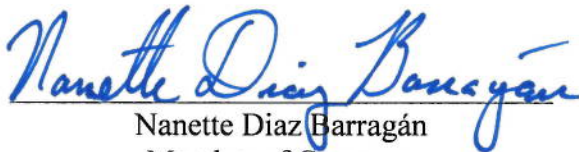
⁴ Almeida, A. (2016) *Latinos left behind by media mergers, finds study led by Frances Negrón-Mutaner*. Columbia News. Accessed online at <https://news.columbia.edu/news/latinos-left-behind-media-mergers-finds-study-led-frances-negron-muntaner>



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