



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Shelley B. Mayer

## Hispanic Heritage Month Celebration in New Rochelle hosted by Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins & Senator Mayer

SHELLEY B. MAYER | October 8, 2019

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NEW ROCHELLE, NY -- On Monday, October 7th, Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins and State Senator Shelley Mayer hosted a Hispanic Heritage Month Celebration to honor the diverse Hispanic communities of Westchester and their many contributions.

The ceremony kicked off with a cultural dance performance by the local dance troupe Alma Solana. Alma Solana is a Latin American heritage dance ensemble that offers cultural

performances within the Sound Shore community. The troupe has been performing for 47 years and has danced at several annual community events including Port Chester Votes at the Capitol Theater and multicultural functions at Kensico Dam.

After the performance, Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins and Senator Shelley Mayer honored Jackeline Agudelo, the Executive Director of the United Community Center of Westchester (UCCW) in New Rochelle, where the celebration was hosted, with a NYS Senate Proclamation. Ms. Agudelo launched the UCCW in 2005. The non-profit provides critical resources that bring legal and immigration assistance, health care, education, food and emergency assistance to those in need. Since its incorporation, the UCCW has assisted over 85,000 individuals and received recognition and accreditation from the US Department of Justice, Executive Office for Immigration Review and the Office of Legal Access Programs. Westchester County Executive George Latimer also sent a proclamation to honor Ms. Agudelo.

Attendees then heard from a panel of experts about “Community Tactics for the 2020 Census: What You Can Do to Ensure a Complete Count.” Regional Director of the U.S. Census Bureau, Jeff Behler; Executive Director of the Community Resource Center, Jirandy Martinez; and Co-Chair of the Village of Port Chester Complete Count Committee, Zeltzyn Sanchez Gomez participated in the panel discussion. Every year, 55 federal programs rely on Census data to guide the distribution of billions of dollars of federal funding to states, municipalities, and households.

Topics discussed during the panel included:

The need for trusted community partners to work with the Census Bureau to promote the Census;

Strategies to ensure historically hard-to-count communities are counted, including foreign-born residents, children under five-years-old, renters, seniors, and others; and

How to allay the fears of immigrant communities to cooperate with a federal government agency, among other topics.

Lieutenant Governor Kathy Hochul also came by the Hispanic Heritage Month Celebration and commended Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins and Senator Mayer for hosting a substantive event to ensure that every community member is counted for the 2020 Census. Lieutenant Governor Hochul also presented a proclamation to Ms. Agudelo for her work serving the community.

**Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins** said, "We are fortunate to have a strong and vibrant Hispanic community in Westchester County and throughout New York State. As we celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month, it is important that we recognize the many ways our state has benefitted from our diversity and give thanks to members of the Latinx community. We must also use this opportunity to help spread the word about the 2020 U.S. Census and how important it is for every New Yorker to participate and be counted. A complete count is vital to help ensure our schools, affordable childcare, highways, medical centers, and more receive the federal support they deserve over the next decade."

**State Senator Shelley Mayer** said, "I am glad to co-host this dynamic event to celebrate the rich contributions and heritage of Hispanic communities in Westchester. Many community members and organizations are doing outstanding work to promote, engage, and organize the Hispanic communities, and I am proud to recognize one of those leaders at this celebration, Jackeline Agudelo, Executive Director of the United Community Center of Westchester. Leading up to 2020, it is also important that we disseminate information about the 2020 Census to ensure a complete count. The distribution of billions of dollars in federal and state funding is dependent upon accurate population data. The 2020 Census can ensure the delivery of many critical resources and funds to vulnerable populations in our communities. Thank you to my co-host, Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins, and

everyone who came to celebrate the Hispanic communities of Westchester.”

**Jirandy Martinez, Executive Director of the Community Resource Center** said, “A complete Census Count has never been more important in our country and our state. Although Census 2020 was at risk of being politicized, the damage has been done for a survey that historically has had trust-issues among the most vulnerable in our communities. All New Yorkers lose when we don’t have a proper and complete count, so it’s up to all of us to mobilize, participate, and volunteer to ensure we’re all counted—because we matter.”

**Zeltzyn Sanchez Gomez, Co-Chair of the Village of Port Chester Complete Count Committee** said, “The Latinx community has helped support the U.S. economy beyond comprehension, and yet, has been on the receiving end of hatred and vitriol. Participating in the Census seems counter-intuitive—exposing yourself to a federal administration that doesn't protect the Latinx community—but we must inform everyone about all of the ways a complete count can help vulnerable populations. The 2020 Census provides a once-in-a-decade opportunity to empower the community: funding for transportation and expanding bus routes that take many people to their jobs; child care resources and having access to Head Start and affordable child care that allows people to go to work; funding for school lunch programs to ensure that the meager dollars earned at these jobs are maximized because you know your child will be fed during school hours. These are all of the things the community needs to thrive and a complete count for the Census gets us there. We need to understand the positive impact that a complete count will have in our lives and constantly talk to our neighbors, friends and family about the importance of the 2020 Census.”

**Jeff Behler, U.S. Census Bureau -- New York Regional Director** said, “While a Census is a national event, in order to be successful, it must be conducted at the local level. This starts with hiring people to work in their own communities. We look forward to working with Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins of the 35th Senate District and State Senator Shelley B.

Mayer of the 37th Senate District and their offices to ensure that together we provide easy and ample opportunities for local community members to apply to Census jobs."

The Census Bureau also announced employment recruitment events for the 2020 Census. The week of October 20, 2019, the Bureau is hosting recruiting informational sessions across the country, including several in Westchester.

**New Rochelle Public Library**

Tuesday, October 22, 2019

11:00 AM to 4:30 PM

1 Library Plaza, New Rochelle, NY 10801

**Mount Vernon Public Library**

Tuesday, October 22, 2019

10:00 AM to 5:00 PM

28 S 1st Avenue, Mt. Vernon, NY 10550

**Warner Library**

Tuesday, October 22, 2019

11:00 AM to 6:00 PM

121 North Broadway, Tarrytown, NY 10591

**Port Chester-Rye Brook Public Library**

Wednesday, October 23, 2019

10:00 AM to 4:00 PM

1 Haseco Avenue, Port Chester, NY 10573

Census staff will be present at each event to assist individuals who may need help through the hiring process. Interested individuals must be at least 18-years-old to apply.