



## The Latino Community Fund Believes a Multilingual Georgia is Key to Stimulating International Economic Development in the State

Georgia has become a premier international trade partner with significant economic relationships in Asia and Latin America. Among Latin American countries, Mexico is Georgia's 2nd largest export market; the trade between them surpassed \$10.4 billion in 2017.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, the Peach State maintains international representatives in multiple strategic Latin American markets including Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Peru;<sup>2</sup> each has future growth opportunities.

Competition in international markets abounds, and our state must capitalize on every advantage. Our global market competitors are already devoted to increasing language competencies in their countries; the European Commission in 2017, for example, committed member states in making all school children at least bilingual.<sup>3</sup> Georgia already has a growing competitive edge in this area. Counties like Gwinnett are becoming excellent examples of how we can leverage multilingualism to attract international business. According to the Gwinnett County economic development team, over 550 international companies have validated Gwinnett as a prime location to do business; the county registers over 100 different languages within its geographical area.<sup>4</sup>

As other states and nations embrace multilingualism, any state legislation promoting monolingualism hinders our ability to grow local, interstate, and international trade. It may be perceived as an unwillingness to engage in some markets while making the state less attractive to businesses and tourists.

English-only legislation is a solution in search of a problem. New Americans are not devoted to changing the lingua franca of the United States; rather, they eagerly and actively learn English in pursuit of the renowned American Dream. Pew Research data, in fact, shows that the vast majority of those from Latin American backgrounds speak English with 88% of 2nd generation Latino immigrants speaking English fluently.<sup>5</sup>

The nation has long understood the value of language in economics, policy, and more; the Constitution was itself published in German and Dutch. A commitment to stunted monolingualism now will not result in any meaningful benefits, but it will give a negative perception of Georgia as it competes with other states and economies which have more global value propositions. The Latino Community Fund Georgia is committed to promoting the state as a premier place to build business, work, study, raise families, and thrive. English-only legislation would only serve to hinder these goals we all collectively strive for.

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1 Office for Economic Affairs, Mexico, "Georgia-Mexico Trade Relationship," [www.naftamexico.net/naftaworks/usmextrade/georgia.pdf](http://www.naftamexico.net/naftaworks/usmextrade/georgia.pdf).

2 Georgia Department of Economic Development, "2017 International Trade Numbers," [www.georgia.org/import-export-numbers](http://www.georgia.org/import-export-numbers).

3 Education and Training, European Commission, "The European Commission promotes language learning and linguistic diversity across Europe," [https://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/multilingualism/about-multilingualism-policy\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/multilingualism/about-multilingualism-policy_en).

4 Partnership Gwinnett, "Gwinnett International Profile," [www.partnershipgwinnett.com/global-business/](http://www.partnershipgwinnett.com/global-business/).

5 Russell Heimlich, "Second-Generation Latinos Fluent in English," Pew Research Center, December 28, 2007, [www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2007/12/28/second-generation-latinos-fluent-in-english/](http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2007/12/28/second-generation-latinos-fluent-in-english/).