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PRESS RELEASE

LATINO MALES LEAD CITY OF CHICAGO IN HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUT NUMBERS

While Political Power Rises, Economic Opportunity Declines for Latino High School Dropouts

CHICAGO -- The employment and earnings prospects of high school dropouts continues to decline as The Great Recession has eased, leaving the poorly educated young adults of the 2010s considerably worse off in the city of Chicago, its metropolitan region, and Illinois as a whole, according to a new report commissioned by the Alternative Schools Network and prepared by the Center for Labor Market Studies at Northeastern University, Boston, Mass.

The report found that Latino dropouts have seen their economic potential wane even more quickly than any other demographic -- male Latinos in particular have seen joblessness rise and wages fall in the city, region and state -- even as that ethnicity's power in the voting booth continues to rise.

"The crucial need for a high school diploma in achieving stable and even moderately paying employment over a lifetime continues to grow with each passing decade -- and yet our fastest-growing demographic groups continue to lag behind in achieving that goal," said Andrew Sum, Director of the Center for Labor Market Studies, who prepared the report with Ishwar Khatiwada. "Policy-makers at all levels must find the wherewithal to invest in these youth before they go over the educational cliff."

The report *High School Dropouts in Chicago and Illinois and Their Persistent Labor Market Problems* was released today at the *Home Grown Solutions: Policies and Programs to Re-Enroll Out of School Youth* policy convening with more than 300 policy leaders and re-enrolled youth. Illinois State Senate President **John Cullerton**, Illinois General Assembly Majority Leader **Barbara Flynn Currie** and Chicago Board of Education members **Jesse Ruiz** and **Andrea Zopp** spoke at the policy forum at The Union League Club of Chicago with other policy leaders.

Convening co-sponsors included the Chicago Urban League, Youth Connection Charter School, the Alternative Schools Network, WTTW 11 Chicago, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, Illinois Network of Charter Schools and the Illinois State Council on Re-Enrolling Students Who Dropped out of School.

"While the Latino community demonstrated a growing political power at the ballot box, their economic growth is still being hampered by high dropout rates," said Jack Wuest, Executive Director at the Alternative Schools Network in Chicago, which commissioned the report, as part of an ongoing series of reports on out of school and unemployed youth from Northeastern University's Center for Labor Market Studies.

Key Findings

The central findings of the report include:

- **Illinois adults ages 18 to 64 who lack a high school diploma or GED both worked fewer hours and weeks, and earned lower average wages.** Their mean annual earnings were \$13,700 in the state of Illinois, compared to \$18,400 for those with a GED, \$22,220 for those with a regular diploma and \$33,600 for those with an associate's degree.

- **These discrepancies begin in early adulthood and continue through retirement years, increasing with each passing decade of life.** The mean earnings of high school graduates were \$3,500 per year higher than those of dropouts across the state from ages 18 to 24, widening to \$8,940 higher for those ages 25 to 34 and peaking at a gap of \$17,600 from ages 45 to 54. Between 33% and 39% of dropouts ages 35 to 54 did not work at all during 2010-11, rising to 54% from age 55 to 64.
- **Mean lifetime earnings of high school dropouts in Illinois were considerably lower than those who continued their education --** at \$574,000, compared to a GED (\$832,000), high school diploma (\$1.1 million) and associate's degree (\$1.5 million). The gap between lifetime earnings of male dropouts and diploma holders was even higher: male dropouts earned \$757,000, while men with high school diplomas earned more than \$1.3 million from ages 18 to 64.
- **Some 15% of youth ages 19 to 24 in the city of Chicago (nearly 38,000) lacked a high school diploma,** with men (18%) more likely than women (10%) not to have completed high school; among those ages 16 to 18 in Chicago, an average of 8.1% could be categorized as dropouts, slightly more than 9,000 people, according to averaged findings of the 2009-2011 American Community Surveys from the U.S. Census (ACS).
- **Among 19- to 24-year-olds, Latinos (23%) and African Americans (18%) were more likely than white, non-Latinos (4%) to have dropped out overall,** while among males those figures were slightly higher, 28% for Latinos, 24% for African Americans and 5 percent for whites. City youth were more likely to lack a diploma (14.6%) than those in the suburbs (9.2%) or state (11.2%).
- **Youth ages 19 to 24 who were foreign born were more than twice as likely (25.2% vs. 11.6%) to lack a diploma,** and nearly half of foreign-born Latino males (46%) fell into that category vs. only 17% of their native-born counterparts. Nearly one-third of the total youth lacking a diploma (31%) were foreign born. Multiplied out over a lifetime, the likelihood of lagging economic outcomes among minority and foreign-born youth contrasts with rising voting-booth clout.
- **Despite the easing of the Great Recession, just over half of high school dropouts ages 18 to 64 in the city of Chicago (52.9%) worked at all in the year prior to the 2010-11 ACS,** which means their joblessness is not anything short-term or temporary. For those with a GED or equivalent, that figure rose to 60.5%, and for those with a diploma, 65.0%. Similar percentage increases were in evidence among those in the region, state and nation.
- **This is a significantly bleaker picture than in past decades.** The employment percentage of 16- to 19-year-old dropouts in the city of Chicago has declined by more than half in the past 12 years, from 38.9% in 1999-2000 to 18.2% in 2011-12; while for slightly older dropouts, those ages 20 to 24, 50.7% were employed in 1999-2000 and 32.3% in 2011-12.

The report's findings and solutions for re-enrolling out of school youth at the state, county and city level was the subject of the policy forum held from 8 a.m. to noon today, at The Union League Club of Chicago, 65 West Jackson Boulevard. Keynote speakers included Illinois State Senate President **John Cullerton**, Illinois General Assembly Majority Leader **Barbara Flynn Currie**, State Council Chair and Chicago Board of Education member **Jesse Ruiz**, and Urban League President and CEO **Andrea Zopp**, also a Board of Education member. A panel discussion moderated by WTTW-TV Chicago Tonight Correspondent **Elizabeth Brackett** featured **Sheila Venson**, Executive Director, Youth Connection Charter School; **Matthew Rodriguez**, Principal, Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos High School; **Juan Salgado**, President & CEO, Instituto del Progreso Latino; **Myra Sampson**, Principal, CCA Academy; **Jack Wuest**, Executive Director, Alternative Schools Network; and **Keisha Davis-Johnson**, Principal, West Town Academy.



The Alternative Schools Network is a not-for-profit organization in Chicago working to provide quality education with a specific emphasis on inner-city children, youth and adults. Since 1973, ASN has been supporting community based and community-run programs to develop and expand training and other educational services in Chicago's inner-city neighborhoods, particularly for Chicago's high school dropouts. In addition to supporting direct services, ASN has advocated for community based services in which the people involved are active participants in developing and running programs rather than passive recipients of services.

Center for Labor Market Studies is an applied research, evaluation, and policy-oriented technical assistance unit located within the Department of Economics of Northeastern University. It was initially established in 1979 to provide regional leadership for a three-year grant that the Economics Department had received from the U.S. Department of Labor under the Institutional Grant Program.

The report is part of an ongoing series reporting on the consequences of dropping out of high school. To obtain a full copy of the report go to www.asnchicago.org.

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