



November 16, 2017

Dear Community Services Committee members and CDD Staff,

I am writing this letter in support of Centro Hispano's Escalera Program - based on a national model started at UNIDOS US (formerly National Council of La Raza) that is meant to promote economic mobility for youth through a rigorous semi-scripted curriculum that is responsive to students' culture, something which is sorely missing within Madison schools and community. The program values community, social capital, experiential learning activities, and case management of the student and the family. Here in Madison we offer internship opportunities for all of our Latino students regardless of legal status, as they are pair with companies and mentors who can relate to their lived experiences.

I am grateful to the staff who recommended an equitable bump in City funding for Escalera, up from \$15,804 to \$51,550 in 2018. I am asking that as a committee you please support this increase and consider fully funding our request of \$65,000. At Centro we have a strong partnership with the Madison Metropolitan School District because of the added value our programming brings to youth and their families in the schools. We bring direct alignment with the schools district's vision of engaged youth who are community ready for post-secondary life. Our success is evident in 100% of our youth graduating from high school, with a plan, and aspirations for their future. This is quite different from when they first come to Centro - disengaged, often broken, stressed, burdened, and at risk for not finishing school, while navigating school environments where they feel as if they do not belong. I ask to fully fund our request so that we can continue to strengthen the foundation of Escalera as an important program for Madison's Latino youth. The additional requested funds would fully secure staff salaries, while allowing us to continue to strengthen programming through innovative partnerships, including a focus on STEM and literacy.

Regardless of all the challenges faced, our students at Centro never face these responsibilities alone. Two coordinators take on the rigorous task of guiding and encouraging each student to rise to their true potential. Mentoring over fifty students each, these coordinators spend their days not only running programming, scheduling workshops, and managing volunteers, they also pour countless hours into developing positive relationships with their students and their students' families. Program participants routinely describe their experience as being one of a kind to having a second family that cares about their success.

Our programming is multi-generational, community-based and outcomes oriented. Financial support from the City of Madison will solidify high-quality services to a generation of graduating Latino youth with the tools they need to succeed and give back to the community.

Thanks in advance for your consideration. We look forward to hearing the final decision.

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