

Statement Regarding Hispanic Heritage Month 2021

The BHRC joins in the yearly celebration of the National Hispanic Heritage Month from September 15 to October 15. It presents an opportunity to reflect upon and highlight the contributions of individuals of Hispanic and Latinx heritage across the nation as well as here at home. The contributions of the Hispanic and Latinx to the US culture, the arts, the military, economic development, public policy, and science are immeasurable. The community is richly diverse across race, language and the cultural heritage spectrum. Members of the community may identify as recent immigrants while others can trace back their family's immigration stories across many generations. Members of the Hispanic and Latinx community are an integral part of our community here in Belmont; they are residents, business owners and employees. In addition to celebrating their vast contributions we recognize that there is work to be done to combat systemic barriers and inequities that affect them. We recognize that health disparities disproportionately impact communities of color nationwide and in MA. This was particularly intensified with the Covid-19 pandemic which had a disproportionate impact on the Hispanic and Latinx communities. Many members of the community served as front line workers including in health care, public transit, childcare, education and food services.

As the national rhetoric on immigration intensifies, we highlight that no human being is illegal. We stand with advocates across the nation, calling for the reunification of detained unaccompanied migrant children with their families and for their removal from correctional facilities and warehousing centers while they await for their asylum/immigration proceedings to take place.

There is more work to be done in our community to prevent racist and ethnophobic hate, particularly impacting black and brown Hispanics and Latinx. One of our own, Mr. Henry Tapia, was murdered last January in a racist attack. His memory is a reminder that our Belmont community is not immune to the racist hate bubbling up across the nation. It is important to note that Mr. Tapia was not just a victim, he was a father, a partner, a friend, a gamer, and proud of his Dominican heritage. Just like he was, all our Hispanic and Latinx neighbors and friends have multidimensional stories to tell. It is important that we listen and partner up with them to eliminate the systemic barriers and disparities that disproportionately impact them.

There are actions that Belmontonians can take to support the community during Hispanic Heritage month. Among them, support small Hispanic and Latinx businesses, inform yourself by reading from Hispanic and Latinx authors, and donate to community grass roots organizations that work closely to support the community.