



For Immediate Release

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New Jersey Department of Education Celebrates Hispanic Heritage Month

Trenton, NJ – The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) will celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month next week with inspiring messages from some of the state’s most influential and impactful leaders. This year’s theme is “Celebrating Latinx Pride: Celebrando Nuestra Herencia Hispana.”

United States Senator Robert “Bob” Menendez, Saint Peter’s University Professor Leonor Lega, New York Red Bulls’ Coach Denis Hamlett, and ambassador and Secretary-General of El Salvador to the United Nations Carlos Garcia will share video messages in both Spanish and English to inspire students and educators throughout the state.

“In the midst of today's challenges, Hispanic Heritage Month gives us an opportunity to acknowledge our successful past and prepare ourselves for a brighter future,” **said Kerlyn Espinal, Deputy Assistant Commissioner of Cultural and Historic Commissions.** “Our students, regardless of race and background, are our future leaders. They are empowered through a quality education to achieve their goals. As we all know, education is the tool that can transform life. We are a part of the American fabric and we embody the American Dream. Viva nuestra gente!”

NJDOE’s virtual festivities will also feature cultural dances, an art exhibition, and testimonials from students and staff. NJDOE celebrations recognize the lasting impact that Latinx New Jerseyans have had on the state, including participating in public service, innovating our economy, revolutionizing STEM pathways, excelling in education, enriching the arts and humanities, and calling for social change. Hispanic Heritage Month is celebrated every year from September 15th to October 15th.

"Part of our commitment to service at the New Jersey Department of Education is to ensure that equity in education is at the forefront of what we do each day, and representation is a key component to equity. It’s important for students to see themselves reflected in the teachers and leaders who educate them – and to take pride in their backgrounds ," **said Interim Education Commissioner Kevin Dehmer.**

This year’s celebration comes on the heels of Angel Santiago, a fifth-grade teacher in Camden County’s Gloucester Township School District, being named the 2020-2021 New Jersey State Teacher of the Year last week. In his role, Santiago will work with the New Jersey state Department of Education, meet with fellow educators around New Jersey, and take part in national conferences with other State Teachers of the Year. Santiago has said he believes one way to close equity gaps in New Jersey is through promoting a diverse teaching workforce.

