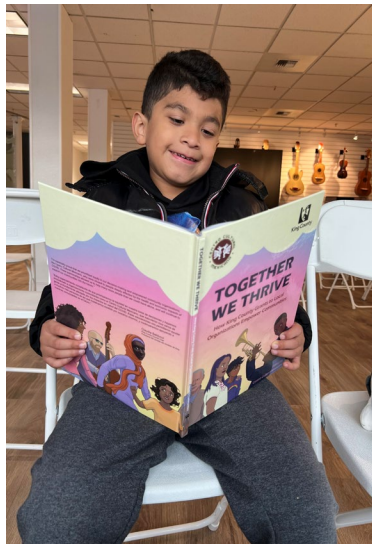


## Commissioner Spotlight: Chair, Angie Hinojos



### Ya es tiempo

By Chair Angie Hinojos

We are over 1 million proud Latinos in this state and we have much to celebrate. We celebrate our beautiful cultures and traditions, our families, our community. We celebrate our precious children—one in 4 students in Washington state are Latino! We celebrate our successes—Latino small businesses support the economy of our communities and provide essential services. We celebrate our leaders—we have eleven Latino elected representatives in our state House of Representatives and Senate! They lead in our desire for representation, as Latinos are 14% of the state population.

We celebrate our innovative spirit—we are creative, hardworking, and we persevere through adversity. Our children learn the history they study at school, and at home they learn **our** truth, the one that only we will tell. In our learning we are eager to acknowledge the accomplishments of Latinos who have contributed, and still contribute, to the building of this country.

We also know that we have been traversing through dark years, capped by the pandemic, where many in our community have experienced grave losses. We have been moving through a treacherous night, with no light to guide our path, and with our sorrows gently settled around our shoulders, a reminder that we bear a grief that will never leave us.

We have lost jobs, we have lost homes, we have lost loved ones; for many, our dreams have been ground into the dirt, and yet...we still nurture a seed of hope. We tend it quietly, starting over, sprinkling water from our palms, looking to a day when that seed will sprout from the warm earth and grow into something brilliant. In those times when there was nothing, I saw our people sharing food with strangers, cradling each other's babies, consoling the ill and forgotten, and enfolding into their arms those who had even less.

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I saw children caring for grandparents who no longer recognized them, and I saw our elders guiding lost teens into adulthood. I saw adults scraping to salvage pieces of their former lives, forced to make choices that were designed to break us: food or medicine? A home or an education? But we don't break. We work, we study, we sing, we love...we celebrate.

We all want the same things: financial stability, a safe place to call home, healthy food, access to doctors, and an education for ourselves and our children. We want representation in government and in our institutions. We not only want to have a presence, but we also want to be part of decision-making at all levels so that we can be the authors of our own destinies and enjoy the same rewards that have been granted to others.

Every day I see examples of my community members who move through this world with bravery, compassion, and grace, and that gives me the courage to share our truths, the ones I know from my own experience and from others', to question systems that not only do not work for us, but often actively work against us.

Each of us carries a vision of a future where we pursue our dreams without restraint and where we reach our full potential—what if we shared a single vision? What if we dreamed together, planned together, excelled together, and celebrated...together? **The Time is Now, Ya es tiempo.**

