

27 de Enero 2022

THE WEEKLY ISSUE

# El Semanario

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**Embroidering Hope**  
*Bordando Esperanza*

**8**

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**27 de Enero 2022**  
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THE WEEKLY ISSUE

# El Semanario

## We Speak Your Language



Our podcast features a series of conversations with local and national influencers who engage with our communities and reflect on our responsibilities.

- Democracy
- Reproductive Justice
- Environment
- Immigration
- Education
- LGBTQ+



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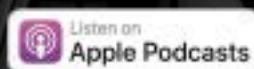
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# PODCAST

Commentary/Comentario

## More Boldness Needed on the Immigration Front

Maribel Hastings and David Torres

The first year of the Biden presidency has passed and with it, all the analysis about why immigration reform remains undone once again. The key question is what can be accomplished. That is, what is the next step to achieve something in this electoral year, a panorama that becomes even more complicated for the rest of this presidency if the Democrats lose control of Congress.

Owing to the existential threat that the prior administration represented for millions of undocumented immigrants and their families, it is all the more urgent to establish strategies for intelligent action, not contemplation or lengthy discussions, in order to avoid a major catastrophe. In other words, doing nothing is not an option.

There is already a group advocating for Senate Democratic leaders to bypass the Parliamentarian's recommendation to exclude legalization language in the Build Back Better Act. But, we don't even know if this bill will advance before the midterm elections.

Essentially, we are entering the dangerous territory of "one step forward, two steps back," which in politics services no one.

Now Biden says that the bill should be debated in pieces, while the Democratic Senator from West Virginia, Joe Manchin—the same one who, along with Kyrsten Sinema, Democrat from Arizona, put a

wrench in the president's agenda—says that his lower cost Build Back Better (BBB) plan is not on the table.

Essentially, we are entering the dangerous territory of "one step forward, two steps back," which in politics services no one—especially not those who have been waiting diligently, for decades, to regularize their immigration situation, and who have always taken the necessary steps to sustain their families and the economies of the places in which they live. The steps they have taken have always been deliberate and forward.

Another option is for the Democrats to present stand-alone legislation that legalizes certain groups of undocumented people, like the proposals the House of Representatives approved to legalize Dreamers, farm workers, TPS beneficiaries, and essential workers. The chances of this taking place in



Photo/foto: América's Voice



Photo/foto: América's Voice

today's environment are minimal, but it would be fair to present them so that the Senate has to vote on them and show, once again, how pro-immigrant rhetoric does not translate into real support, particularly from some democrats. And let's not forget the Republican opposition en bloc.

What does that leave, then? TPS extensions? Designating TPS for citizens of additional countries? Executive orders like DACA?

Whatever the option may be, the Democrats have to show that they are doing something, that the issue is not dead and that they will defend it until the objective is won—not through false promises, but concrete actions through solid and durable arguments.

As long as Congress fails to do its job of legislating, it is expected that the agencies and executive

See Hastings/Torres on page 16

## Hace Falta Más Audacia en el Frente Migratorio

Maribel Hastings and David Torres

Ya pasado el primer aniversario de la presidencia de Joe Biden y los análisis de cómo la reforma migratoria una vez más quedó en el tintero, la pregunta obligada es qué resta por hacer. Es decir, cuál es el siguiente paso para lograr algo en este año electoral, que complicaría todavía más el panorama en el frente migratorio en lo que resta de esta presidencia si los demócratas pierden el control del Congreso.

Dada la amenaza permanente

que representó el gobierno anterior para millones de inmigrantes indocumentados y sus familias, se torna urgente en ese sentido empezar desde ya a establecer estrategias de acción inteligentes, no de contemplación ni de discursos a la ligera, para evitar un mal mayor. En otras palabras, cruzarse de brazos no es opción.

Ya hay un sector que aboga para que los líderes demócratas del Senado pasen por alto la recomendación de la Parlamentaria de no incluir el lenguaje de legalización en el proyecto de ley Para una Mejor Reconstrucción

(Build Back Better/BBB). Pero, en primer lugar, ni siquiera se sabe si ese proyecto volverá a ver la luz del día antes de las elecciones intermedias.

Biden ahora dice que podría debatirse por partes, mientras el senador demócrata de West Virginia, Joe Manchin —el mismo que junto a la demócrata de Arizona, Kyrsten Sinema, dio una estocada a la agenda del presidente—, ahora dice que su propuesta de un plan BBB a menor costo ya no está sobre la mesa.

Es decir, se está entrando en el terreno peligroso de dar "un paso adelante para dar dos pasos atrás" que, en política, a nadie conviene, pero sobre todo no a quienes han esperado afanosamente durante décadas para regularizar su situación migratoria, y quienes definitivamente

siempre han dado los pasos necesarios para sostener a sus familias y a las economías de sus lugares de residencia. Pero sobre todo, esos pasos siempre han sido hacia adelante y sin dudar.

Otra opción sería que los demócratas presenten legislación independiente que legalice a ciertos grupos de indocumentados, como los proyectos que aprobó la Cámara Baja que legalizarían a Dreamers, trabajadores agrícolas, beneficiarios de TPS y trabajadores esenciales. Las posibilidades de que eso ocurra en el ambiente actual son mínimas, pero sería justo que se presentara para que el Senado se viera obligado a votar y poder ver, de nueva cuenta, cómo la retórica pro inmigrante no se traduce en apoyo real, particularmente de parte de un sec-

Es decir, se está entrando en el terreno peligroso de dar "un paso adelante para dar dos pasos atrás" que, en política, a nadie conviene.

tor demócrata. Eso sin contar la oposición republicana en bloque.

¿Qué restaría entonces? ¿Extensiones al TPS? ¿Conceder TPS a ciudadanos de países adicionales a los ya protegidos? ¿Órdenes ejecutivas similares a DACA?

Cualquiera que sea la opción, debe demostrarse que se está haciendo algo, que el tema no ha muerto y que se defenderá hasta conseguir el objetivo, no mediante falsas promesas, sino con base en propuestas concretas con argumentos sólidos que no se agoten en la primera discusión.

Es decir, en tanto el Congreso no lleve a cabo su función de legislar, es de esperar que a nivel de agencias y a nivel ejecutivo comiencen a tomarse medidas dirigidas a amparar a ciertos sectores de indocumentados y a llenar ese vacío. Precisamente de eso se trata, de llenar el vacío de esperanza que han dejado los fracasos migratorios consecutivos del año pasado en esos 11 millones de seres humanos.

No obstante, del dicho al hecho hay un gran trecho. Las órdenes

Vea Hastings/Torres/Esp, página 16



## Amazon Profits Off Criminalization of Immigrant Communities

Allegra Love

Throughout the last year, the Amazon corporation has given American consumers plenty of reasons to question whether we should be using its products and services. The news is filled with horrible stories about Amazon's treatment of their workers. The company has an astronomical carbon footprint. The billionaire CEO has so much superfluous income he was able to launch himself into the atmosphere in the midst of a global pandemic.

One aspect of Amazon's business that rarely makes the news is how richly it profits off of our government's terrorization of immigrants. The Quaker organization American Friends Service Committee recently published a divestment list that listed 60 publicly traded companies that profit significantly off of the surveillance and criminalization of immigrant communities and the militarization of the border.

Amazon is at the top of that list.

Amazon Web Service controls one-third of the global cloud-storage market, sales from which accounted for \$46 billion of the corporation's \$386 billion dollars of revenue in 2020, according to the



Photo: Allegra Love

committee. Amazon Web Service also provides the Department of Homeland Security with sophisticated platforms to store, share and process data for Immigration and Customs Enforcement to track down immigrants in the U.S. and detain and deport them, the organization reports.

Amazon also has part ownership in Air Transport Services Group, a charter airline that runs deportation flights for individuals deemed as "high-risk," according to the committee's research. It is on these flights that ICE uses the WRAP — a torturous restraint method akin to a straight jacket, people who experienced it told the San Diego Union-Tribune in October.

The debate around immigration policy in the U.S. is framed as an

ideological clash between liberals who favor open borders and conservatives who want to restrict migrant flow into the US, but we rarely see a discussion of who is profiting off of the policies we fight over.

Migration to the United States' southern border is often seen as a crisis by the media and politicians, and then the crisis generates profitable opportunities for companies who can sell our government the tools to solve it. Border militarization is big business, and there is significant money in Washington to make sure that it stays big.

If Americans disapprove of companies profiting off of criminalizing and terrorizing immigrants, one option is divestment. Divestment is the act of untangling a person's or even an institution's finances from companies that profit from harmful social policies. It has been used as a tool around the world to support campaigns to end apartheid, for nuclear disarmament, to fight oil pipelines and to change fossil fuel consumption.

As it becomes more apparent that some decision-makers in Washington put their corporate partners ahead of their constituents, one way we can strike back is by threatening corporations financially through divestment.

In the last few years pressure the country's biggest banks to end ties with the private prison industry was successful. Many of the wealthiest university systems in the U.S. followed suit. Locally, the New México Educators Retirement Board voted to eliminate private prisons from its investment portfolio.

But personal divestment from these companies can be tricky. Not many of us have investments with private prison corporations or border contractors directly. Sometimes the financial institutions we bank and invest with do have ties to deadly companies, but those connections can be somewhat tricky to figure out.

When it comes to Amazon, out of all the companies on the American Friends Service Committee's divestment list, that's the one that almost every American household gives money to, whether people have an account with Amazon Prime, shop at Whole Foods, or occasionally order the things they need immediately and can't find locally.

During the pandemic, when stores can be nerve-racking in terms of viral spread, Amazon seems like an easy solution sometimes.

“

Amazon also has part ownership in Air Transport Services Group, a charter airline that runs deportation flights for individuals deemed as "high-risk," according to the committee's research. It is on these flights that ICE uses the WRAP — a torturous restraint method akin to a straight jacket.

But as we continue to decide whether the products and conveniences Amazon offers merit the labor violations, the contributions to climate change, or the concentration of wealth in the hands of the billionaires, we must also weigh if it is worth supporting the criminalization of migrant communities as well.

*Allegra Love is an immigration attorney from Santa Fe, New México. This article is republished from Source New Mexico under a Creative Commons license.*

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## Concerns Over Affirmative Action and Supreme Court

Liz Wellen

After the pandemic forced classes online, Harvard University junior Swathi Kella watched classmates from an array of backgrounds and races pop onto her screen, their names and faces far more diverse than those of her New Jersey high school. Now, she worries that the variety she values in her education could disappear for generations to come.

"If affirmative action goes away, opportunities to learn from different perspectives and world views will be limited, and that does an in-

justice to students," Kella told me during a break from her classes in Cambridge, Massachusetts, on Monday, after a conservative-dominated Supreme Court agreed to hear challenges to race-conscious admissions. "It's kind of shocking when you think about what this will mean concretely for the student body."

For 40 years, the Supreme Court has protected affirmative action that helps colleges open doors for racial minorities. It's a concept many say is more urgent than ever, with racial gaps in higher education widening, threatening years of progress for underrepre-

sented students. Such gaps could grow even larger once the nation's highest court considers two lawsuits, one arguing that Harvard actively discriminates against Asian American applicants, the other that the University of North Carolina discriminates against Asians and whites.

If the court agrees and eliminates consideration of race, the decision could upend college admissions, leaving minorities who are vastly underrepresented at many selective schools and flagship universities even further behind, despite an ongoing racial reckoning aimed at making college campus-

es more inclusive. The contrast isn't lost on Angel Pérez, chief executive of the National Association for College Admission Counseling.

"There is a real fear of moving backwards on the college access agenda," Pérez told me, adding that many admissions professionals and college presidents he's spoken with are alarmed about what the court could decide, at a moment when they are pushing for changes based on equity. "What will our institutions look like if we don't take race into consideration?"

Colleges, of course, are also deeply worried — as they should be, said Jerome Lucido, an expert

“

"There is a real fear of moving backwards on the college access agenda. What will our institutions look like if we don't take race into consideration?"

Angel Pérez, National Association for College Admission Counseling

on college admissions and the executive director of the USC Center for Enrollment Research, Policy

See [Wellen](#) on page 17

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Commentary / Comentario

# I Write About America's Absurd Health Care System, Then I Got Caught Up in It

Bram Sable-Smith

I got a hurried voicemail from my pharmacist in Wisconsin the day before Thanksgiving letting me know my insurance was refusing to cover my insulin.

I had enough of the hormone that keeps me alive to last 17 days.

In my 10 years living with Type 1 diabetes, I've never really struggled to access insulin. But in my job reporting on the people left behind by our country's absurdly complex health care system, I've written about how insulin's steep cost leads to deadly rationing and about patients protesting to bring those prices down.

For the most part, though, I've been spared from the problems I cover. Maybe that's why I waited over a week to call my new pharmacy in St. Louis, where I recently moved for this job with Kaiser Health News.

I'd been waiting since September for an appointment with an endocrinologist in St. Louis; the doctor's office couldn't get me in until Dec. 23 and wouldn't handle my prescriptions before then. When I finally called a pharmacy to sort



this out, a pharmacist in St. Louis said my new employer-provided insurance wouldn't cover insulin without something called a prior authorization. I've written about these, too. They're essentially requirements that a physician get approval from an insurance company before prescribing a treatment.

Doctors hate them. The American Medical Association has a website outlining proposed changes to the practice, while the insurance industry defends it as protecting patient safety and saving money. It feels like a lot of paperwork to confirm something we already know: Without insulin, I will die.

I knew right away the prior authorization would be a problem. Since it was a Saturday when I learned about the need for the authorization, my best option was to call my old endocrinologist's practice that Monday morning and beg his staffers to fill out forms for their now former patient.

I had enough insulin to last seven days.

But late that afternoon, I got an automated message from the pharmacy about an insurance issue.

After spending 45 minutes on hold the next morning, I finally got through to the pharmacist, who said my insurer was still waiting for a completed prior authorization form from my physician. I called the doctor's office to give a nudge.

Four days' worth of insulin left.

The price of my prescription without insurance was \$339 per vial of insulin, and I use about two vials per month. Normally, I pay a \$25 copay. Without the prior authorization, though, I'm exposed to the list price of insulin, as is anyone with diabetes who lacks insurance, even if they live in one of the states with copay caps intended to rein in costs.

I called the pharmacy again on Thursday at 7:30 p.m., figuring it'd be less busy. I got right through to the pharmacist, who told me my insurer was still waiting on the prior authorization form. Friday morning, the diabetes nurse at my doctor's office said she'd check on it and call me back.

I'd be out of insulin the next day.

By this time, I was live-tweeting my attempt to refill my prescription and started to get the kind of messages that are familiar to anyone in what's known as the "diabetes online community." People in Missouri offered me their surplus insulin. Some suggested I go to Walmart for \$25 insulin, an older type I have no idea how to safely use.

My new strategy was to use one of the programs that insulin manufacturers started recently to help people get cheaper insulin. The very same day, the U.S. House Committee on Oversight and Reform's Democrats released a report deriding these types of assistance programs as "tools to garner positive public relations, increase sales, and raise revenue."

But before I tried that option, I heard back from the nurse who had called the pharmacy (she had spent 25 minutes on hold) and learned that my new insurance wouldn't cover the brand of insulin I was using. The pharmacist was checking on a different brand.

Soon the pharmacist called: My insurance would cover the other brand. But the pharmacy might not have enough to fill my order. She said I should call a different branch of the chain. The first location I called was also out but pointed me to another one that had it.

With 12 hours' worth of insulin left, I walked out of that third store with my medicine in hand.

It took 17 days and 20 phone calls. But I know I'm lucky. My insurance really is exceptional, re-

“By this time, I was live-tweeting my attempt to refill my prescription and started to get the kind of messages that are familiar to anyone in what's known as the 'diabetes online community.'”

cent events aside. My boss insisted that being alive was part of my job as I spent hours on the phone during the workday. And my job is to be persistent as I puzzle through the labyrinth of U.S. health care.

The time wasted by me, the pharmacists, the nurses and probably some insurance functionaries is astounding and likely both a cause and a symptom of the high cost of medical care. The problem is also much bigger than that.

Insulin is the single most important resource in my life, and this is what I had to do to get it. But I know not everyone has my good fortune. I've interviewed the loved ones of people with Type 1 diabetes who could not get insulin, and it's not hard to imagine how my story could have ended just as tragically.

On Dec. 23, I finally saw my new doctor, who sent in a new prescription. That night, I got a message that my insurer was waiting on a prior authorization.

I had 17 days' worth of insulin left.

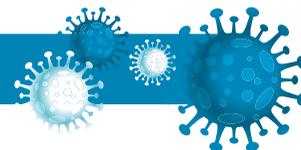
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## Why Medicare Doesn't Pay for Rapid At-Home Covid Tests

By Michelle Andrews

**W**hat group is especially vulnerable to the ravages of covid-19 even if fully vaccinated and boosted? Seniors. And who will have an especially tough time getting free at-home covid tests under the Biden administration's plan? Yes, seniors.

As of Jan. 15, private insurers will cover the cost of eight at-home rapid covid tests each month for their members — for as long as the public health emergency lasts.

Finding the tests will be hard enough, but Medicare beneficiaries face an even bigger hurdle: The administration's new rule doesn't apply to them.

It turns out that the laws governing traditional Medicare don't provide for coverage of self-administered diagnostic tests, which is precisely what the rapid antigen tests are and why they are an important tool for containing the pandemic.

"While at this time original Medicare cannot pay for at-home tests, testing remains a critical tool to help mitigate the spread of covid," a statement from the federal Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services said. Medicaid and CHIP cover at-home covid tests, with no cost to beneficiaries, based on a 2021 Biden administration mandate.

Medicare patients are left to seek free tests other ways, including through the administration's new website, covidtests.gov, and at community centers. The Medicare program does cover rapid antigen or PCR testing done by a lab without charging beneficiaries, but there's a hitch: It's limited to one test per year unless someone has a doctor's order.

More needs to be done, advocates say.

The administration has changed some Medicare rules during the pandemic, including improving access to telehealth services and nursing home care, said David Lipschutz, associate director and senior policy attorney at the Center for Medicare Advocacy.

"We know that the Medicare program has significant flexibility relative to the public health emergency, and it has demonstrated it has the ability to alter the rules," Lipschutz said. "We think they should find the flexibility to offer the covid at-home tests for free."

"We think they should find the flexibility to offer the covid at-home tests for free."

**Q: Why can't the Medicare program reimburse beneficiaries for the over-the-counter tests or pick up the tab at the pharmacy as commercial health plans will do?**

The services the Medicare program pays for are spelled out in federal law.

"It generally excludes over-the-counter things," said Casey Schwarz, senior counsel for education and federal policy at the Medicare Rights Center, an advocacy group.

The public health emergency was recently extended 90 days, through mid-April, and the admin-



Finding at-home Covid tests will be hard enough, but Medicare beneficiaries face an even bigger hurdle. / Encontrar cualquiera de las pruebas es bastante difícil, pero los beneficiarios de Medicare enfrentan un obstáculo aún mayor.

istration could yet decide to expand coverage. Some lawmakers in Congress are urging the administration to cover the tests.

"Demanding Medicare recipients — nearly one-fifth the population of the United States — to foot the bill out-of-pocket for at-home tests is unfair, inefficient, and will cost lives," said Rep. Bill Pascrell Jr. (D-N.Y.), who has urged the Biden

administration to expand Medicare coverage to include them.

It may not be a simple change, as these tests appear to fall into coverage gaps. Medicare Part A covers hospitalization, and Part B generally covers provider-based services like doctor visits and lab tests. Part D covers drugs.

See [Medicare](#) on page 18

## ¿Por Qué Medicare No Paga por las Pruebas Caseras para Covid?

Por Michelle Andrews

**¿**Qué grupo es especialmente vulnerable a los estragos de covid, incluso si está vacunado por completo y con sus refuerzos? Los adultos mayores. Sin embargo, ¿quién tendrá más dificultades para obtener pruebas caseras gratuitas para covid según el plan de la administración Biden? Sí, los adultos mayores.

Desde el 15 de enero, las personas con seguro privado pueden comprar hasta ocho pruebas caseras rápidas de covid al mes, y sus planes de salud deben pagarlas, mientras dure la emergencia de salud pública.

Encontrar cualquiera de las pruebas es bastante difícil, pero los beneficiarios de Medicare enfrentan un obstáculo aún mayor: la nueva regla de la administración no aplica para ellos.

Resulta que las leyes que rigen Medicare no brindan cobertura

para las pruebas de diagnóstico autoadministradas, que es precisamente lo que son las pruebas rápidas de antígenos, y la razón por la que son una herramienta importante para contener la pandemia.

"Si bien en este momento el Medicare Original no puede pagar las pruebas en el hogar, las pruebas siguen siendo una herramienta fundamental para ayudar a mitigar la propagación de covid", según un comunicado de los Centros de Servicios de Medicare y Medicaid (CMS).

Básicamente, los pacientes de Medicare pueden buscar pruebas gratuitas de otras maneras, a través del nuevo sitio web de la administración, covidtests.gov, y en centros comunitarios o librerías de condados.

El programa de Medicare cubre pruebas rápidas de antígeno o PCR realizadas por un laboratorio sin cobrar a los beneficiarios, pero aquí está el problema: se limita a

una prueba por año a menos que se tenga una orden médica.

Se necesita hacer más, dicen defensores de los adultos mayores.

La administración ha cambiado algunas reglas de Medicare durante la pandemia, por ejemplo mejorar los servicios de telesalud y de atención en los hogares, dijo David Lipschutz, director asociado y abogado de políticas de seniors en el Center for Medicare Advocacy.

"Sabemos que el programa de Medicare tiene una flexibilidad significativa en relación con la emergencia de salud pública", dijo Lipschutz. "Creemos que deberían encontrar la flexibilidad para ofrecer las pruebas de covid en el hogar de forma gratuita".

A continuación, algunas respuestas de expertos.

**¿Por qué el programa de Medicare no puede reembolsar a los beneficiarios por las pruebas de**

**venta libre o pagar la cuenta en la farmacia como lo hacen los planes de salud comerciales?**

Los servicios que paga el programa de Medicare se detallan en la ley federal y las pruebas de diagnóstico en el hogar no figuran como servicio.

"Por lo general, excluye los artículos de venta libre", dijo Casey Schwarz, asesora principal de educación y política federal en el Medicare Rights Center, un grupo de defensa.

La emergencia de salud pública se extendió recientemente 90 días, hasta mediados de abril, por lo que la administración aún podría determinar que tiene la autoridad para ampliar la cobertura. Según informes, algunos legisladores en el Congreso están instando a la administración a cubrir esas pruebas.

Puede que no sea un cambio simple, ya que las pruebas parecen caer en brechas de cobertura. La Parte A de Medicare cubre la

hospitalización y la Parte B generalmente cubre los servicios del proveedor, como visitas al médico y análisis de laboratorio. La Parte D cubre los medicamentos.

"Así que hay dudas sobre en dónde encajaría este tipo de beneficio", dijo Schwarz.

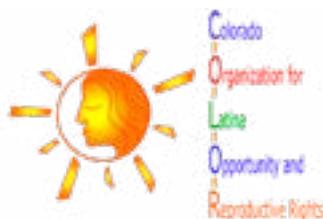
Las personas en planes privados a veces pagan por adelantado los servicios y luego su plan de salud les reembolsa. Pero Medicare no funciona así. El programa paga a los proveedores, no a los beneficiarios. Esa es otra dificultad que debería resolverse.

**Entonces, ¿cómo puede un beneficiario de Medicare obtener pruebas caseras gratuitas para covid?**

Hay un par de opciones. La administración Biden lanzó covidtests.gov, donde cualquier persona, incluidos los beneficiarios de Medicare, puede solicitar pruebas

Vea [Medicare/Esp](#), página 17

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## Waiting at the Border, Migrants Lean on Tradition

By Lourdes Medrano

**O**ne early afternoon, Sandra Vázquez sits on an old metal bench outside a bus station, next to two other women who, like her, gingerly embellish a piece of cotton fabric with decorative patterns. Buses come and go, day after day, but the women stay. And, needle and thread in hand, they keep stitching.

Vázquez and the other women are among scores of migrants stranded in Mexican border towns waiting for their U.S. asylum cases to be processed under ever-changing policies and a lingering pandemic. After fleeing her mountainous hamlet in Guerrero, a state in southwestern México where conflict and violence have uprooted many residents, Vázquez and 11 members of her extended family ended up in Nogales, Sonora, México, in July.

They found shelter near the border crossing at the bus station, a place that has gradually turned into a makeshift refuge for soaring numbers of migrants arriving in the city just south of Arizona. There, Vázquez soon joined other women who daily embroidered

cloths, called *mantas* or *servilletas* in Spanish, which are used to keep *tortillas*, bread, and other foods warm. “When I embroider, I don’t think about everything that is happening, everything that I have lived through,” Vázquez says.

About two decades before Vázquez and her family arrived in Nogales, embroidered *mantas* began appearing in the borderlands. In the 1990s, when the United States implemented a new strategy to deter illegal border crossings, migrants were pushed away from cities into remote, harsh desert terrain. The casualties rose in subsequent years, with migrants perishing in relentless heat, others being picked up by the Border Patrol, and some just disappearing, with only their belongings left behind. Among the shoes, handkerchiefs, and backpacks strewn on the desert floor, and that area residents recovered, lay the *mantas*, some ripped by the elements. Many people viewed the remnants as trash, but Valerie Lee James, an artist who lived on a ranch near the border, says she understood what the *mantas* she picked up meant for migrants. In Latin América, *mantas* or *servilletas* stitched with bright



Sandra Vázquez and other women sit on a bench and embroider mantas. / Sandra Vázquez y otras mujeres se sientan en un banco a bordar mantas.

Photo/Foto: Lourdes Medrano

depictions of people, animals, and objects are family treasures frequently passed down from one generation to another.

“I wanted nothing more than to find their rightful owners someday,” James says. She never found the

owners of those she came across, but those desert *mantas* would later lead to cross-border alliances that culminated in a migrants’ embroidery project under the auspices of a nonprofit she established, Artisans Beyond Borders.

Vázquez is one of dozens of women, and some men, at various Nogales shelters participating in Bordando Esperanza, Embroidering Hope. The program, which involves volunteers from Arizona and Sonora, aims to bring comfort to migrants in times of uncertainty, James says. “All of these folks are stuck at the border now, and so they need work like this more than ever. Oftentimes, this kind of work is the closest to any kind of psychological well-being that they’re going to be able to have, to take a moment out to find some peace.”

To handle a huge influx of Central Americans seeking asylum, the Trump administration in 2019 put into effect the contentious Migrant Protection Protocols, which forced migrants to await case proceedings south of the border rather than in the U.S. In early 2021, the Biden administration halted the program and allowed some 10,000 asylum seekers into the country, but the program has since been restored. For some migrants in Nogales, the craft of embroidery makes the wait a little less excruciating.

Studies show that engaging in embroidery and other textile crafts can alleviate stress and reduce anxiety. Migrant advocates in Nogales say stitching pleasant memories onto fabric can soothe

emotional wounds sustained before or during often-arduous migration journeys northward. For Vázquez, a mother of two, the needlework keeps her mind off her cousin’s killing, the threatening extortionists back in Guerrero who demanded a fee if she wanted to keep her market stall open, and her family’s long wait for an opportunity to plead their case for political asylum in the United States. “We can’t return home,” she says. “I want my children to be safe, to have a good life.”



“When I embroider, I don’t think about everything that is happening, everything that I have lived through.”

Sandra Vázquez

Vázquez’s family is one of 14 from México, Guatemala, and Honduras staying on the grounds of the bus station, says Norma Ascencio, who works there and oversees the embroidery project. A short distance from a U.S. port of entry, the station over the years became a gathering place for Mexican migrants who were deported from the U.S. and, more recently, for many Central Americans and other asylum seekers who must



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## Esperando en la Frontera, los Migrantes se Apoyan en la Tradición



Norma Ascencio supervisa el proyecto de bordado Bordando Esperanza, en Nogales, México. / Norma Ascencio oversees the embroidery project, Bordando Esperanza, in Nogales, México.

Por Lourdes Medrano

Una tarde temprano, Sandra Vázquez se sienta en un viejo banco de metal frente a una estación de autobuses, junto a otras dos mujeres que, como ella, adornan con cuidado un trozo de tela de algodón con motivos decorativos. Los autobuses van y vienen, día tras día, pero las mujeres se quedan. Y, aguja e hilo en mano, siguen cosiendo.

“

“Cuando bordo, no pienso en todo lo que está pasando, en todo lo que he vivido”.

Sandra Vázquez

Vázquez y las demás mujeres son algunas de las decenas de inmigrantes que se encuentran varadas en las ciudades fronterizas mexicanas a la espera de que se tramiten sus casos de asilo en Estados Unidos, en el marco de unas políticas siempre cambiantes y de una pandemia persistente. Tras huir de su aldea montañosa en Guerrero, un estado del suroeste de México donde el conflicto y la violencia han desarraigado a muchos residentes, Vázquez y 11 miembros de su familia ampliada acabaron en Nogales, Sonora, México, en julio.

Encontraron refugio cerca del paso fronterizo de la estación de autobuses, un lugar que se ha con-

vertido gradualmente en un refugio improvisado para el creciente número de migrantes que llegan a la ciudad situada al sur de Arizona. Allí, Vázquez pronto se unió a otras mujeres que diariamente bordan telas, llamadas mantas o servilletas en español, que se utilizan para mantener calientes las tortillas, el pan y otros alimentos. “Cuando bordo, no pienso en todo lo que está pasando, en todo lo que he vivido”, dice Vázquez.

Unas dos décadas antes de que Vázquez y su familia llegaran a Nogales, las mantas bordadas comenzaron a aparecer en las tierras fronterizas. En los años noventa, cuando Estados Unidos puso en marcha una nueva estrategia para disuadir de los cruces ilegales de la frontera, los emigrantes fueron expulsados de las ciudades hacia terrenos desérticos y remotos. El número de víctimas aumentó en los años siguientes, con migrantes que perecieron en el implacable calor, otros que fueron recogidos por la Patrulla Fronteriza y algunos que simplemente desaparecieron, dejando sólo sus pertenencias. Entre los zapatos, pañuelos y mochilas esparcidos por el suelo del desierto, y que los residentes de la zona recuperaron, se encontraban las mantas, algunas desgarradas por los elementos. Mucha gente consideraba los restos como basura, pero Valerie Lee James, una artista que vivía en un rancho cerca de la frontera, dice que entendió lo que las mantas que recogió significaban para los migrantes. En América Latina, las mantas o

servilletas cosidas con brillantes representaciones de personas, animales y objetos son tesoros familiares que suelen pasar de una generación a otra.

“Lo único que quería era encontrar algún día a sus legítimos dueños”, dice James. Nunca encontró a los dueños de los que se encontró, pero esas mantas del desierto darían lugar más tarde a alianzas transfronterizas que culminaron en un proyecto de bordado de migrantes bajo los auspicios de una organización sin ánimo de lucro que ella creó, Artisans Beyond Borders.

Vázquez es una de las docenas de mujeres, y algunos hombres, que participan en Bordando Esperanza en varios albergues de Nogales. El programa, en el que participan voluntarios de Arizona y Sonora, tiene como objetivo llevar consuelo a los migrantes en tiempos de incertidumbre, dice James. “Toda esta gente está atrapada en la frontera ahora, y por eso necesitan más que nunca un trabajo como éste. A menudo, este tipo de trabajo es lo más cercano a cualquier tipo de bienestar psicológico que van a poder tener, para tomarse un momento para encontrar algo de paz.”

Para gestionar la enorme afluencia de centroamericanos que solicitan asilo, la administración Trump puso en marcha en 2019 los polémicos Protocolos de Protección de Migrantes, que obligaban a los migrantes a esperar los procedimientos del caso al sur de la frontera y no en Estados Unidos.

A principios de 2021, la administración Biden detuvo el programa y permitió la entrada de unos 10.000 solicitantes de asilo en el país, pero el programa se ha restablecido desde entonces. Para algunos migrantes en Nogales, la artesanía del bordado hace que la espera sea un poco menos insoportable.

Los estudios demuestran que practicar el bordado y otras artesanías textiles puede aliviar el estrés y reducir la ansiedad. Los defensores de los migrantes en Nogales afirman que coser recuerdos agradables en la tela puede

aliviar las heridas emocionales sufridas antes o durante los a menudo duros viajes de migración hacia el norte. Para Vázquez, madre de dos hijos, la labor de aguja le permite olvidar el asesinato de su primo, las amenazas de los extorsionistas de Guerrero que le exigían una cuota si quería mantener su puesto en el mercado, y la larga espera de su familia para tener la oportunidad de solicitar asilo político en Estados Unidos. “No podemos volver a casa”, dice. “Quiero que

Vea **Migrantes**, página 20



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## Colorado Offers Residents Special Health Insurance Enrollment Period

### COLORADO

By Markian Hawryluk

A wildfire displaced thousands of Coloradans just as the omicron surge began sweeping through the state, so health insurance was likely not on many people's minds when the regular enrollment period for the state's health insurance marketplace ended Jan. 15. But now, because of those twin emergencies, everyone in the state will get another chance to sign up.

State officials last week launched a [special marketplace enrollment period](#), through March 16, open to all uninsured Coloradans regardless of whether they've been directly affected by the fire or the covid-19 surge.

The Marshall Fire started on Dec. 30, just two weeks before the deadline to sign up for a 2022 plan. The fire destroyed more than 1,000 houses and businesses, quickly becoming the state's most destructive fire by number of structures lost.

"It's such a disruption to people's lives," Colorado Insurance Commissioner Michael Conway said.



Colorado is offering a special health enrollment period for all people across the state due to the covid-19 surge and the Marshall Fire in December. / Colorado ofrece un periodo de inscripción sanitaria especial para todas las personas del estado debido al aumento del covid-19 y al incendio de Marshall en diciembre.

"It's not just the people who lost their homes — it's across the board, affecting the entire community."

Meanwhile, the emergence of the omicron variant of the coronavirus caused covid cases to spike to record levels in January, stressing hospitals and health systems.

"These folks are just trying to put their lives back together," said Kevin Patterson, CEO of Connect for Health Colorado, the state's health insurance marketplace, created under the Affordable Care Act. "So giving them some additional time seemed like a reasonable and thoughtful thing to consider."

In addition to providing immediate relief to Coloradans in a crisis, the move underscores how much industry attitudes toward the Affordable Care Act have changed. Insurance companies were initially skeptical about the financial risks and worried that consumers would game the system. But the insurers have largely embraced the exchanges and are working to sign up as many people as possible. After experiencing few problems during the special enrollment period held last year because of covid, health plans have agreed to the removal of safeguards — such

as a limited window of time to sign up for coverage — that regulators once required.

"Amid the recent COVID-19 surge and tragic wildfires, it is important that people in Colorado have the opportunity to obtain health care coverage," Patrick Gordon, CEO of the Rocky Mountain Health Plans, said in an email.

Special enrollment periods have been used in California because of wildfires, in Maine when strong winds knocked down power lines, and in Gulf states hit by Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria.

Such periods have often been limited in scope and sometimes required people to provide proof they had been affected.

Colorado state officials are taking a different route. They opted to make signing up for coverage as easy as possible and are not requiring consumers to demonstrate they qualify.

"It didn't seem like something that was necessary, especially when we look at our experience over the last year," Conway said. "The vast majority of the year was effectively a special enrollment period, and there wasn't that much disruption in the market."

Insurance analyst Charles Gaba said there are three primary reasons for limiting health plan sign-ups to an open enrollment period.

The first is that deadlines spur people to sign up. Each year, enrollment numbers spike in the final days of the sign-up period.

Second, insurance companies need time to analyze their revenue and costs to set premiums for the following year. That process, Gaba said, typically begins in March.

Third, and most importantly, insurance companies initially lobbied for a limited open enrollment period to keep people from waiting until they are sick to buy insurance. That changed during the pandemic. Colorado and most other states that run their own exchanges held special enrollment periods in 2020 and 2021 because of covid. When the Trump administration declined to do the same for the federal exchange, health insurance trade groups urged it to reconsider. The incoming Biden administration agreed and extended the enrollment period through August 2021 — and more than 2.8 million additional Americans signed up for coverage.

Conway said no evidence exists that consumers waited until they were sick to buy coverage last year. With so many consumers eli-



"It's such a disruption to people's lives. It's not just the people who lost their homes — it's across the board, affecting the entire community."

Michael Conway,  
Colorado Insurance  
Commissioner

gible for no-cost or low-cost plans because of more generous subsidies, there is little reason for them not to sign up immediately.

"As health policy folks, sometimes we get into our heads and we see monsters under the bed that simply are not there because of the complexity of the system," Conway said.

Health plans in Colorado were largely supportive of the move. John Roble, president of Cigna's Mountain States market, said the company is allowing early prescription refills and is working with local hospitals to transfer patients to help alleviate crowding at overwhelmed facilities.

Past special enrollment periods largely attracted a healthier population than standard open enrollment periods. Those with chronic health conditions, who face the potential of high medical bills, usually enroll early in the standard open enrollment period.

"They are first out of the gate," said Louise Norris, who operates a Colorado health insurance brokerage with her husband. "They're ready to sign up Nov. 1."

The procrastinators are those generally less concerned about their health and more apt to leave things to the last minute, she said. The added time will also help people who chose to go without insurance but then experience a significant medical problem after the standard open enrollment period closes, she said.

State officials said new health concerns stemming from the fires and the omicron surge may also make health coverage more important for some Coloradans.

Consumers benefit when more people, particularly more healthy people, enroll. "The more people that get covered, the more stable the overall risk pool is, the more stable the premiums are for consumers," said Adam Fox, deputy director of the Colorado Consumer Health Initiative, a nonprofit

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## Colorado Ofrece un Período Especial de Inscripción en el Seguro de Salud



Foto/Photo: Connect for Health Colorado

Connect for Health Colorado ofrece un periodo de inscripción sanitaria especial para todas las personas del estado debido al aumento del covid-19 y al incendio de Marshall en diciembre. / Connect for Health Colorado is offering a special health enrollment period for all people across the state due to the covid-19 surge and the Marshall Fire in December.

### COLORADO

Por Markian Hawryluk

Un incendio forestal desplazó a miles de habitantes de Colorado justo cuando la oleada de omicron arrasaba al estado, por lo que inscribirse para tener cobertura médica no estaba en la mente de muchas personas cuando cerró el mercado de seguros de salud el 15 de enero.

Pero ahora, por estas dos emergencias, todos tendrán otra oportunidad de inscribirse.

Funcionarios estatales anunciaron la apertura de un período especial de inscripción hasta el 16 de marzo, abierto para todos los residentes de Colorado sin seguro, independientemente de si fueron afectados por el fuego o por covid-19.

El incendio de Marshall comenzó el 30 de diciembre, justo dos semanas antes de la fecha límite para inscribirse en un plan para 2022. El fuego destruyó más de 1,000 casas y negocios, convirtiéndose en el incendio más destructivo del estado por el número de edificios perdidos.

"Es un gran trastorno para la vida de las personas", dijo el comisionado de seguros de Colorado, Michael Conway. "No se trata solo de quienes han perdido sus casas, sino que afecta a toda la comunidad".

Mientras tanto, la aparición de la variante omicron del coronavirus hizo que los casos de covid se dispararan a niveles récord en enero, poniendo presión en los hospitales y sistemas de salud.

"Estas personas están tratando de rehacer sus vidas", expresó Kevin Patterson, CEO de Connect for Health Colorado, el mercado de seguros de salud estatal, creado bajo la Ley de Cuidado de Salud a Bajo Precio (ACA). "Así que darles un tiempo adicional parecía algo razonable y considerado".

Además de proporcionar un alivio inmediato a los habitantes de Colorado en crisis, la medida subraya lo mucho que han cambiado las actitudes de la industria hacia ACA.

Al principio, las aseguradoras se mostraban escépticas respecto a los riesgos financieros y les preocupaba que los consumidores jugaran con el sistema. Pero ahora han adoptado en gran medida los mercados, y trabajan para inscribir al mayor número de personas posible.

Tras experimentar pocos problemas durante el periodo de inscripción especial del año pasado a causa de covid, los planes de salud han aceptado que se eliminen las salvaguardias —como un plazo limitado para inscribirse en la cobertura— que los reguladores exigían en el pasado.

"En medio del reciente aumento de covid-19 y los trágicos incendios forestales, es importante que la gente de Colorado tenga la oportunidad de obtener cobertura médica", escribió en un correo electrónico Patrick Gordon, CEO de Rocky Mountain Health Plans.

Los periodos especiales de inscripción se han utilizado en California debido a los incendios forestales, en Maine cuando los fuertes vientos derribaron las líneas eléctricas, y en los estados del Golfo afectados por los huracanes Harvey, Irma y María.

Tales periodos han sido a menudo limitados en su alcance y a veces requerían que las personas proporcionaran pruebas de que habían sido afectadas.

Los funcionarios de Colorado han tomado una ruta diferente. Optaron por hacer que la inscripción para obtener cobertura sea lo más fácil posible, por lo que no se requiere que los consumidores demuestren que califican.

"No parecía algo necesario, sobre todo si tenemos en cuenta

nuestra experiencia en el último año", afirmó Conway. "La mayor parte del año fue efectivamente un periodo de inscripción especial, y no hubo tanta perturbación en el mercado".

El analista de seguros Charles Gaba dijo que hay tres razones principales para limitar las inscripciones en los planes de salud a un periodo de inscripción abierta.

La primera es que los plazos incitan a la gente a inscribirse. Cada año, el número de inscripciones se dispara en los últimos días antes que cierre la ventana de inscripción.

En segundo lugar, las compañías de seguros necesitan tiempo para analizar sus ingresos y costos para fijar las primas del año siguiente. Este proceso, según Gaba, suele comenzar en marzo.

En tercer lugar, y lo más importante, las compañías de seguros presionaron inicialmente para que se limitara el periodo de inscripción abierta y evitar así que la gente esperara hasta estar enferma para comprar un seguro.

Pero esto cambió durante la pandemia. Colorado y la mayoría de los otros estados que administran sus propios mercados tuvieron periodos de inscripción especiales en 2020 y 2021 debido a covid. Cuando la administración Trump se negó a hacer lo mismo para el mercado federal, los grupos comerciales de seguros de salud lo instaron a reconsiderar.

La administración entrante de Biden estuvo de acuerdo y extendió el periodo de inscripción hasta agosto de 2021, y más de 2,8 millones de estadounidenses adicionales se inscribieron para tener cobertura.

Conway dijo que no existen pruebas de que el año pasado los consumidores hayan esperado a estar enfermos para comprar cobertura. Con tantos consumidores elegibles para planes sin costo o de bajo costo debido a subsidios más generosos, hay pocas razones para que no se inscriban inmediatamente.

"Como responsables de política sanitaria, a veces se nos mete una idea en la cabeza y vemos monstruos debajo de la cama que simplemente no existen, debido a la complejidad del sistema", comentó Conway.

Los planes de salud de Colorado apoyaron mayoritariamente la medida. John Roble, presidente del mercado Mountain States de Cigna, dijo que la compañía está permitiendo la reposición tem-

prana de recetas y trabaja con los hospitales locales para transferir a pacientes, y ayudar a aliviar el hacinamiento en los centros.

Los anteriores periodos de inscripción especial atrajeron en gran medida a una población más sana que las ventanas de inscripción abierta normales. Las personas con problemas de salud crónicos, que se enfrentan a posibles facturas médicas elevadas, suelen inscribirse apenas comienza la inscripción regular.

"Son los primeros", dijo Louise Norris, que dirige una agencia de

“

Es un gran trastorno para la vida de las personas. No se trata solo de quienes han perdido sus casas, sino que afecta a toda la comunidad".

Michael Conway,  
Comisionado de Seguros  
de Colorado

Vea Seguro, página 16



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State News / Noticias del Estado

# Denver's School Closure Criteria Committee Now Seeking Applicants

COLORADO

By Melanie Asmar

In anticipation of a 6% enrollment decrease over the next five years, the Denver school district is moving forward with a process to close or consolidate small schools. Denver Public School Superintendent Alex Marrero announced a new timeline that calls for community members to start applying now for a committee that will come up with criteria for closing schools with low enrollment in 2024.

Per the timeline, the committee would announce the criteria in the fall, and the school board would

vote on school closures next winter. The schools wouldn't shutter until the spring of 2024.

But Marrero warned that some underenrolled schools could be forced to close before then, outside of the official process. Denver schools are funded per pupil, and schools with low enrollment struggle to pay enough staff to keep their doors open.

"In this 1½-year wait as we do this process, there are some [schools] who are on life support right now that potentially would not even make it to that timeline," Marrero said.

Declining enrollment is arguably Denver Public Schools' most pressing issue, and one that other

local districts are grappling with as well. Data released last week shows fewer students are enrolled in Colorado public schools now than before the pandemic. In Denver, the declines are due to a combination of lower birth rates and high housing costs that push families out of the city, though parents' pandemic-era schooling choices have played a small role too.

Denver is still the state's largest district, with about 90,300 students in preschool through 12th grade. But that's down from 93,800 students in 2019, and the district predicts the declines will continue. By the 2025-26 school year, Denver estimates it will have just 85,200 students.

In June, the school board passed a resolution that directed the district to work with parents, educators, and neighbors to come up with a plan for closing or consolidating elementary schools with fewer than 300 students. The district identified 19 schools to take part, but Marrero paused the work in September, saying the district needed to focus on pandemic recovery.

In November, Marrero jettisoned the list of 19 schools and switched the district's approach. Instead of convening regional groups to make recommendations on closing specific schools, the district would form a single committee to establish common criteria for clo-

“

"I've served on these committees. I know what they look like, and I know who the loudest voices are, and I just want to make sure that we are actually targeting who needs to be in the room, who should be there, and not just who wants to be in control."

Michelle Quattlebaum, DPS Board Member

sure that could be applied to any underenrolled school. Earlier this

See [School](#) on page 21

# El Comité de Cierre de Escuelas de Denver Busca Ahora Candidatos

COLORADO

Por Melanie Asmar

En previsión de una disminución del 6% de la matrícula en los próximos cinco años, el distrito escolar de Denver está avanzando con un proceso para cerrar o consolidar las escuelas pequeñas. El su-

perintendente de las escuelas públicas de Denver, Alex Marrero, anunció un nuevo cronograma que pide a los miembros de la comunidad que comiencen a postularse ahora para un comité que elaborará los criterios para cerrar las escuelas con baja matrícula en 2024.

Según el cronograma, el comité anunciará los criterios en el

otoño, y la junta escolar votaría sobre el cierre de escuelas el próximo invierno. Las escuelas no se cerrarían hasta la primavera de 2024.

Pero Marrero advirtió que algunas escuelas con poca matrícula podrían verse obligadas a cerrar antes de esa fecha, al margen del proceso oficial. Las escuelas de Denver se financian por alumno,

y las escuelas con baja matrícula luchan por pagar al personal suficiente para mantener sus puertas abiertas.

"En esta espera de 1½ años mientras hacemos este proceso, hay algunas [escuelas] que están en soporte vital ahora mismo que potencialmente ni siquiera llegarían a esa línea de tiempo", dijo Marrero.

“

"He servido en estos comités. Sé cómo son, y sé quiénes son las voces más fuertes, y sólo quiero asegurarme de que estamos apuntando realmente a quien necesita estar en la sala, a quien debería estar allí, y no sólo a quien quiere tener el control".

Michelle Quattlebaum, Miembro de la Junta de DPS

La disminución de las inscripciones es, sin duda, el problema más acuciante de las Escuelas Públicas de Denver, y uno con el que también están lidiando otros distritos locales. Los datos publicados la semana pasada muestran que hay menos estudiantes matriculados en las escuelas públicas de Colorado que antes de la pandemia. En Denver, los descensos se deben a una combinación de tasas de natalidad más bajas y a los elevados costes de la vivienda, que empujan a las familias fuera de la ciudad, aunque las opciones de escolarización de los padres durante la pandemia también han desempeñado un pequeño papel.

En junio, el consejo escolar aprobó una resolución que ordenaba al distrito trabajar con padres, educadores y vecinos para elaborar un plan de cierre o consolidación de escuelas primarias con menos de 300 alumnos. El distrito identificó 19 escuelas para participar, pero Marrero puso en pausa

Please contact COLOR about upcoming community forums on the "Know Your Rights" training for immigrant families and the "What's At Stake?" information sessions regarding your health care coverage.

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El Semanario

## Anticipating a 'Post-Roe World,' Democrats Plan Reproductive Rights Bill

### COLORADO

By Faith Miller

A trio of Democratic state lawmakers plans to introduce a bill that, if passed, would enshrine abortion rights in state law.

The policy is planned as a backstop in case the U.S. Supreme Court overturns its 1973 decision in *Roe v. Wade*, the landmark case that established the constitutional right to abortion. While Coloradans currently have access to abortion at all stages of pregnancy, the bill would add an affirmative statement to that effect in Colorado law.

"We want to ensure to Coloradans that their fundamental right to abortion will be protected," said



Lisa Cutter, center, with glasses, speaks at a news conference with the Democratic Women's Caucus of Colorado on Jan. 19, at the Colorado Capitol.

Aurea Bolaños Perea, spokesperson for Colorado Organization for Latina Opportunity and Reproductive Rights, or COLOR, which is backing the bill.

State Rep. Meg Froelich, a Greenwood Village Democrat, is sponsoring the bill along with House Majority Leader Daneya Esgar, a Pueblo Democrat, and Sen. Julie Gonzales, a Democrat from Denver. The lawmakers first announced their intention to run the bill during a December press conference. Froelich later provided more details.

"It will state clearly that access to abortion and the full range of reproductive health care — so, 'full range of reproductive health care, including abortion,' is the way that we talk about it — is a fundamental

“

"We want to ensure to Coloradans that their fundamental right to abortion will be protected."

Aurea Bolaños Perea, COLOR

right in Colorado and that the government cannot interfere with that right," Froelich told Newsline.

The bill would attest to the rights of all Coloradans to access, and to refuse, reproductive or contraceptive care.

"Keeping abortion legal is necessary, but legality alone is not and has never been enough," Rep. Lisa

See [Rights](#) on page 19

## Strikes Absolutely Work': King Soopers Workers Win New Contract



Kim Cordova, president of United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 7, discusses the approved contract with King Soopers unionized workers on Jan. 24.

### COLORADO

By Kenny Stancil

Progressives are celebrating after unionized workers at Denver-area King Soopers grocery stores approved a new three-year contract on Monday following a 10-day strike by more than 8,000 low-wage employees in Colorado.

"Strikes absolutely work," said Kim Cordova, president of United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 7, which organized the work stoppage. "It shows the company that they can't run without workers."

"It shows that where the real power is, it's with the people," added Cordova, who was part of a panel convened by Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) late Monday. "We're hoping that we set the bar so that other workers in this country follow suit."

Sanders, who expressed support for grocery store workers during the strike in Colorado, said this victory over Kroger—a nationwide chain that owns King Soop-

ers—"proves that when workers stand together they can defeat corporate greed."

Although details of the new contract have not been shared by UFCW Local 7, the *Colorado Sun* reported that the deal includes pay raises of more than \$5 an hour for some employees, which the union called "the most significant wage increase ever secured by a UFCW local for grocery workers." The contract also creates more full-time employment opportunities and secures better healthcare and pension benefits as well as stronger workplace safety measures.

"From the beginning of this process, we promised our members that we would procure the very best contract we could," Cordova said in a statement. "We are excited that our members voted overwhelmingly to ratify this industry-leading contract that will ensure King Soopers will respect and protect essential workers as well as pay them fairly."

From January 12 until the strike ended Friday, workers at nearly 80 stores across the Denver metropolitan area, from Parker to Boul-

der, took to the picket lines to demand a living wage and improved conditions.

Despite frontline employees' continued susceptibility to coronavirus transmission, Kroger—a corporate giant worth \$84 billion and one of the nation's largest private

employers—revoked a \$2-an-hour hazard raise in May 2020, just two months into the ongoing global health crisis. A year later, the grocery mega-chain hiked prices at its stores.

The strike started one day after UFCW Local 7 rejected what Cor-

dova called a "grossly unfair" offer from King Soopers management.

That offer coincided with the publication of a report showing that as a result of Kroger's poverty wages and erratic scheduling

Veá [UFCW](#), página 20



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State News / Noticias del Estado

# Protesters Say the State's Spending Priorities Miss Root Causes of Crime

NEW MEXICO

By Austin Fisher

Sitting at a table outside the Roundhouse on the morning of January 18, Hazel Batrezchavez was hand-stitching names into strips of deep red fabric.

Each name was a person who died at the hands of New Mexico police in 2021. All of them will be embroidered and then sewn onto a large banner.

The "sew-in" was part of a demonstration by People's Budget New Mexico, a coalition of more than 15 local organizations calling on state lawmakers to use federal pandemic relief funding to address the root causes of crime.

Around half of the state's American Rescue Plan money still needs to be spent after December's special session. Legislators are supposed to make decisions about the rest of it over the next 30 days.

New Mexico Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham is proposing to spend \$100 million of the state's general fund over the next decade to expand police budgets across the

state and help pay for 1,000 more police officers.

"Living in a safe and healthy community is the right of every New Mexican, and these are smart proposals that get and keep the worst of the worst off of New Mexico streets," Lujan Grisham said in a written statement. "I'm looking forward to working with the Legislature to make sure that every one of these bills crosses the finish line."

Lujan Grisham is also proposing to increase criminal penalties, shift the burden onto defendants to prove they are not dangerous during pretrial detention hearings, and give a 19.5% raise to New Mexico State Police officers.

"I am asking for those things because New Mexicans are asking for them," she said during her State of the State address last Tuesday.

People's Budget New Mexico opposes all of these measures and said the state budget should be spent elsewhere.

"Ordinary New Mexicans are still suffering from the pandemic and decades of disinvestment," said Selinda Guerrero, an abolitionist organizer from Albuquerque. "More funding for the police will

not aid the public health and wellness of our communities, nor will it address the root causes of crime."

Federal recovery money and the state budget should be invested in building safe, healthy communities, not in policing, she said. The proposals will only expand the carceral system in New Mexico, she said.

Guerrero said police presence does not satisfy people's most pressing needs related to their safety: housing, food, health care, education, clean air and water, job opportunities, and urban camping areas with public restrooms and showers.

"In fact, more police presence in our communities, whose needs are chronically unmet, often creates more harm in the form of bodily injury and death, family separation and physical and mental abuse," Guerrero said.

Szu-Han Ho, a professor at the University of New Mexico and a member of an art collective called Fronteristxs, said mass incarceration already disproportionately affects people of color. And high rates of incarceration in certain neighborhoods can lead to more



Organizers Clifton White and Selinda Guerrero hold a banner outside the Roundhouse Santa Fe, New Mexico on Jan. 18. / Los organizadores Clifton White y Selinda Guerrero sostienen una pancarta el 18 de enero, frente a la Roundhouse Santa Fe, Nuevo México.

crime, the coalition argues in a news release, "because of family stress, neighborhood disintegration and undermining community support systems."

“More funding for the police will not aid the public health and wellness of our communities, nor will it address the root causes of crime.”  
Selinda Guerrero, Organizer

ning water, broadband and wood for the winter.

"Those are the kinds of things we should be funding right now," Guerrero said.

The group is waiting to see which lawmakers file bills, Ho said, and organizers were not only critical of some of the measures being proposed. Guerrero said the coalition is excited about the governor's voting rights bill, which is a step toward helping to minimize felony disenfranchisement.

Ho said the group is also advocating for the abolition of life without parole sentencing for youth, a proposal led by the Coalition for the Fair Sentencing of Youth. That bill is not on the governor's agenda for this session, but Sen. Antoinette Sedillo López filed it on Jan. 18.

The embroidered list of victims of police violence is incomplete for now, Batrezchavez said.

Work on the names will continue at monthly events in Albuquerque called Hook It Up Sundays, Batrezchavez said. It's a way to talk to community members more about who these people were, and to hold space for them. They also give out free food and exchange needles.

"There needs to be some sort of recognition for these individuals, they can't get lost in just saying 'this is a number,'" Batrezchavez said. "Because a lot of these individuals, this violence was enacted on them, and their stories are not known, about what happened, about their families and how they're suffering. We need to be able to acknowledge the names as they are."

*Austin Fisher is a journalist based in Santa Fe, New Mexico. This article is republished from Source New Mexico under a Creative Commons license.*

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## Does My Child Need the COVID-19 Vaccine?

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&

**Fact**

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## Los Manifestantes Dicen que las Prioridades de Gasto del Estado pasan por Alto las Causas Fundamentales de la Delincuencia

### NEW MEXICO

Por Austin Fisher

Sentada en una mesa fuera del Roundhouse (edificio del Capitolio del Estado de Nuevo México) el pasado martes, Hazel Batrezchavez estaba cosiendo a mano nombres en tiras de tela de color rojo intenso.

Cada nombre correspondía a una persona que murió a manos de la policía de Nuevo México en 2021. Todos ellos serán bordados y luego cosidos en una gran pancarta.

La "costura" formó parte de una manifestación realizada el 18 de enero por People's Budget New México, una coalición de más de 15 organizaciones locales que pide a los legisladores estatales que utilicen los fondos federales de ayuda a la pandemia para abordar las causas fundamentales de la delincuencia.

Alrededor de la mitad del dinero del Plan de Rescate Americano del estado todavía tiene que ser gastado después de la sesión especial de diciembre. Los legisladores deben tomar decisiones sobre el resto en los próximos 30 días.

La gobernadora de Nuevo México, Michelle Lujan Grisham, propone gastar 100 millones de dólares del fondo general del estado durante la próxima década para ampliar los presupuestos de la policía en todo el estado y ayudar a pagar a 1.000 policías más.

"Vivir en una comunidad segura y saludable es el derecho de cada nuevo mexicano, y estas son propuestas inteligentes que sacan y mantienen lo peor de lo peor de las calles de Nuevo México", dijo Luján Grisham en una declaración escrita. "Estoy deseando trabajar con la Legislatura para asegurarme de que cada uno de estos proyectos de ley cruza la línea de meta".

Luján Grisham también propone aumentar las sanciones penales, trasladar la carga a los acusados para que demuestren que no son peligrosos durante las audiencias de prisión preventiva, y dar un aumento del 19,5% a los agentes de la Policía Estatal de Nuevo México.

"Estoy pidiendo estas cosas porque los nuevos mexicanos las están pidiendo", dijo durante su discurso sobre el estado del Estado el 18 de enero.

People's Budget New México se opone a todas estas medidas y

dijo que el presupuesto estatal debería gastarse en otra cosa.

"Los nuevomexicanos de a pie siguen sufriendo la pandemia y décadas de desinversión", dijo Selinda Guerrero, una organizadora abolicionista de Albuquerque. "Más fondos para la policía no ayudarán a la salud pública y el bienestar de nuestras comunidades, ni abordarán las causas fundamentales de la delincuencia".

“

Más fondos para la policía, no ayudarán a la salud pública y el bienestar de nuestras comunidades, ni abordarán las causas fundamentales de la delincuencia.”

Selinda Guerrero

El dinero de la recuperación federal y el presupuesto estatal deberían invertirse en la construcción de comunidades seguras y saludables, no en la vigilancia policial, dijo. Las propuestas sólo ampliarán el sistema carcelario en Nuevo México, dijo.

Guerrero dijo que la presencia policial no satisface las necesidades más apremiantes de la gente relacionadas con su seguridad: vivienda, alimentación, atención médica, educación, aire y agua limpios, oportunidades de trabajo y áreas de acampada urbana con baños y duchas públicas.

"De hecho, una mayor presencia policial en nuestras comunidades, cuyas necesidades están crónicamente insatisfechas, suele generar más daños en forma de lesiones corporales y muerte, separación familiar y abusos físicos y mentales", afirmó Guerrero.

Szu-Han Ho, profesor de la Universidad de Nuevo México y miembro de un colectivo artístico llamado Fronteristxs, dijo que el encarcelamiento masivo ya afecta de forma desproporcionada a la gente de color. Y las altas tasas de encarcelamiento en ciertos barrios pueden conducir a más delitos, argumenta la coalición en un comunicado de prensa, "debido al estrés familiar, la desintegración del barrio y el debilitamiento de los sistemas de apoyo de la comunidad."

El Comité Legislativo de Finanzas planteó un punto similar, escribiendo que "las fuerzas policiales

más grandes hacen más detenciones por delitos de bajo nivel, lo que puede aumentar el uso de la fuerza y aumentar la probabilidad de un futuro comportamiento criminal de los detenidos."

Nuevo México se encuentra constantemente entre los estados con la tasa más alta de asesinatos de la policía en el país, con el Departamento de Policía de Albuquerque que representa aproximadamente la mitad de los disparos mortales aquí desde 2015, según el Washington Post.

"Esto tiene que parar. No necesitan más dinero. Es hora de empezar a priorizar la comunidad y financiar nuestra comunidad", dijo Guerrero.

Trabajo que queda por hacer

La coalición pide a los legisladores y al gobernador que den prioridad a la satisfacción de las necesidades materiales de la gente frente a los paquetes de mano dura contra el crimen que parecen alzarse como las prioridades del gobernador, dijo Guerrero. La vivienda se ha vuelto inalcanzable en muchas de las ciudades, incluyendo Santa Fe, Albuquerque y Las



Hazel Batrezchavez (derecha) y Jodeci Nious cosen los nombres de las víctimas de la violencia policial en tiras de tela el 18 de enero, frente a la Casa Redonda en Santa Fe, Nuevo México. / Hazel Batrezchavez (right) and Jodeci Nious stitch the names of victims of police violence into strips of fabric on Jan. 18, outside the Roundhouse in Santa Fe, New México.

Cruces, agregó, y las comunidades más rurales necesitan acceso a agua corriente, banda ancha y leña para el invierno.

"Ese es el tipo de cosas que deberíamos financiar ahora mismo", dijo Guerrero.

El grupo está a la espera de ver qué legisladores presentan proyectos de ley, dijo Ho, y los organizadores no sólo criticaron algunas de las medidas propuestas.

Guerrero dijo que la coalición está

entusiasmada con el proyecto de ley del gobernador sobre el derecho al voto, que es un paso para ayudar a minimizar la privación de derechos por delitos graves.

Ho dijo que el grupo también está abogando por la abolición de la cadena perpetua sin libertad condicional para los jóvenes, una propuesta liderada por la Coalición para la Sentencia Justa de los

Vea **Prioridades**, página 20

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branch will begin to take measures to protect certain groups of undocumented people and fill this vacuum. That is exactly what this is about: filling the hole of hope that consecutive immigration failures over the past year have left in these 11 million human beings.

Of course, there is a great leap in moving from word to deed. Executive orders like DACA, on top of being a temporary solution, have been embroiled in judicial disputes almost always initiated by Republican figures, as in the case of Texas, which led the fight against DACA that involved various states.

This may be one of the first obstacles to overcome, since the Re-

publicans have become an automatic anti-immigrant bloc at a time when everyone needs to come together with pragmatic solutions so as not to ruin this country's democracy, hanging by a thread. If the Republican Party does not have eyes to see the plurality and diversity that is developing in today's United States, they are not up to the task of representing this society and have leaps and bounds to go to adapt to this 21st century reality.

Moreover, the ideological composition of the courts, largely of a conservative tendency, has also been of consequence, such as the decision from the District Judge of the Southern District of Texas, An-

drew Hanen who ruled DACA was "illegal." The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) appealed Hanen's ruling to the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals, which also leans conservative, in a case that threatens to head to the Supreme Court, also with a conservative bent. Independent of that, Dreamers deserve a permanent solution.

It's obvious that a list of factors have conspired against immigration reform to legalize millions. Xenophobia and racism are palpable. On the other hand, the pandemic has also stood in the way of a solution, despite the huge efforts undocumented people make to keep this country afloat. To that add wor-

ries about the health of the economy, blanket Republican opposition, Democrats' internal divisions, and their preoccupation with losing control of Congress in 2022 and the White House in 2024.

It's a scene that requires more than a political strategy, from the mind of a statesman who knows how to put things together to rise to a higher level as a nation—one that has a place for all who are contributing to its survival.

Unfortunately there is never a perfect time to make difficult decisions. And Biden, whose approval ratings leave much to be desired in the run-up to the midterm elections, must make bold moves

on the immigration issue. This to demonstrate to a segment of the electorate that, essentially, he didn't forget his campaign promises; so that enthusiasm is carried to the polls; and, of course, to generate a congressional debate that results in some type of agreement that benefits millions of undocumented people.

*Maribel Hastings is a Senior Advisor to **América's Voice**. David Torres is a Spanish-language Advisor at **América's Voice**.*

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ejecutivas, como DACA, aparte de ser una solución temporal, se han visto enfrascadas en disputas judiciales casi todas iniciadas por figuras republicanas, como es el caso de Texas, que encabeza la lucha contra DACA interpuesta por varios estados.

Ese, tal vez, sea uno de los primeros obstáculos a vencer, pues los republicanos se han convertido en el bloque antiinmigrante por antonomasia en estos tiempos en que más se necesita incluir a todos poniendo los pies en la tierra con soluciones pragmáticas para no echar a perder la democracia de este país en un santiamén. Si el Partido Republicano no tiene ojos para ver la pluralidad y la diversidad en que se desarrolla actualmente Estados Unidos, quiere decir que no están a la altura de representar a una sociedad que se quiere y tiene que adaptar a este Siglo XXI a pasos agigantados.

Asimismo, la composición ideológica de los tribunales, mayormente de tendencia conservadora, también ha incidido, como el fallo del juez del distrito Sur de

Texas, Andrew Hanen, que tachó a DACA de "ilegal". El Departamento de Seguridad Nacional (DHS) apeló el fallo de Hanen ante el Quinto Circuito de Apelaciones, de tendencia conservadora, en un caso que amenaza con llegar a una Corte Suprema también de inclinación conservadora. Independientemente de ello, los Dreamers merecen una solución permanente.

Es obvio que se han confabulado una lista de elementos en contra de una reforma migratoria que legalice a millones. La xenofobia y el racismo son palpables. Por otro lado, la pandemia también ha jugado en contra de una solución, a pesar del gran esfuerzo de los indocumentados para mantener a este país a flote. A eso se suman las preocupaciones por el giro de la economía, la oposición republicana en bloque, las divisiones internas de los demócratas y su preocupación por perder el control del Congreso en 2022 y la Casa Blanca en 2024.

Es todo un panorama que requiere más que de un estrategia política, de la mente de un esta-

dista que sepa hacer las combinaciones necesarias para saltar a un nivel superior como nación, una nación en la que quepan todos los que se la han jugado para mantenerla en pie.

Lamentablemente nunca hay un momento perfecto para tomar decisiones difíciles. Y Biden, con unos índices de aprobación que dejan mucho que desear de cara a las elecciones intermedias, debería tomar medidas audaces en el frente migratorio. Ello, para demostrar a un sector del electorado que, en efecto, no se olvidó de sus promesas de campaña; para que de paso los entusiasme a acudir a las urnas y, por qué no, para generar un debate en el Congreso que resulte en algún tipo de acuerdo que beneficie a millones de indocumentados.

*Maribel Hastings es Asesora Ejecutiva de **América's Voice**. David Torres es Asesor en Español de **América's Voice**.*

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Seguro

seguros de salud en Colorado con su marido. "Están listos para inscribirse el 1 de noviembre".

Los que dejan las cosas para más tarde son los que generalmente se preocupan menos por su salud y no hacen nada hasta último momento, señaló. El tiempo adicional también ayudará a las personas que decidieron vivir sin seguro, pero que luego experimentan un problema médico importante después que ya ha cerrado el período de inscripción abierta regular, agregó.

Funcionarios estatales dijeron que las nuevas preocupaciones de salud derivadas de los incendios, y el aumento de omicron, también pueden hacer que la cobertura de

salud se vuelva más importante para algunos habitantes de Colorado.

Los consumidores se benefician cuando se inscriben más personas, en particular más personas sanas. "Cuanta más gente esté cubierta, más estable es el conjunto de riesgos, más estables son las primas para los consumidores", explicó Adam Fox, subdirector de la Iniciativa de Salud del Consumidor de Colorado, una organización de defensa del consumidor sin fines de lucro. "Todo esto ayuda a que la gente siga teniendo cobertura".

Los estados que gestionan sus propios mercados suelen ampliar el plazo de inscripción una o dos semanas más para dar tiempo a

los que llegan tarde. Pero no está claro si algún otro estado seguirá el ejemplo de Colorado y ofrecerá un plazo de dos meses o más en respuesta a la oleada de omicron.

"Sin los incendios, no sé si se lo hubieran planteado", concluyó Conway.

*Markian Hawryluk es el corresponsal principal de Kaiser Health News en Denver, Colorado. Esta historia fue producida por Kaiser Health News, un programa editorialmente independiente de la Kaiser Family Foundation que no está relacionado con Kaiser Permanente.*

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## Wellen

and Practice. So are "industry leaders, the military and social service agencies who count on and believe in a diverse and educated workforce," Lucido told me.

The cases the Supreme Court has agreed to hear when its next term begins in October stem from a contention that race and ethnicity should play no part in college admissions, an argument brought by Students for Fair Admissions, a nonprofit. Not surprisingly, Edward Blum, the activist at the helm of the lawsuits, was elated that the suits will be heard.

"Harvard and the University of North Carolina have racially gerrymandered their freshman classes in order to achieve prescribed racial quotas," Blum wrote in a statement Monday. "Every college applicant should be judged as a unique individual, not as some representative of a racial or ethnic group."

Asian-American students who were denied admission to Harvard allege that the university uses racial quotas that discriminate against them, something Harvard president Lawrence Bacow denies. On Monday, Bacow proclaimed that

Harvard will stand by "40 years of legal precedent granting colleges and universities the freedom and flexibility to create diverse campus communities," adding that "our practices are consistent with Supreme Court precedent; there is no persuasive, credible evidence warranting a different outcome."

UNC spokeswoman Beth Keith promised that the nation's oldest public university will also defend the way students are admitted. "As the trial court held, our process is consistent with long-standing Supreme Court precedent and allows for an evaluation of each student in a deliberate and thoughtful way," Keith's statement said.

Many others I heard from on Monday were angry at the court's continued involvement in a case they believe was already settled: The Supreme Court has upheld the constitutionality of affirmative action programs three times since 1978. Two lower courts found Harvard does not discriminate against Asian Americans, engage in racial balancing or use race as anything other than one consideration when selecting its incoming class.

"The goal of these suits — to end the consideration of race in college admissions — is extreme, ignores the history of race discrimination, and threatens diversity and inclusion on campuses," said Sarah Hinger, a senior staff attorney with the American Civil Liberties Union's racial justice program. "Affirmative action helps to create a diverse student body and enriches the educational experience of all students, and it must remain protected by the Supreme Court."

Niyati Shah, director of litigation for the nonprofit group Asian Americans Advancing Justice, also defended race-conscious admissions policies for giving students "the chance to tell their whole story, inclusive of their race, ethnicity and lived experiences, in addition to their academic achievements."

There were others, though, who welcomed the news that the Supreme Court will hear the case, including Sasha Ramani, a critic of affirmative action and the associate director of strategy for MPOWER Financing, a public benefit corporation that provides loans to students around the world. Rama-

ni said that "using race as a proxy for disadvantage has proven to be both inefficient and problematic," and said colleges should come up with other ways to reach out to disadvantaged students.

The Supreme Court will be hearing the case at a time of deepening cynicism about admissions offices at selective colleges, after the so-called Varsity Blues scandal showcased ways they give a leg up to donors, athletes and legacies that by some estimates double or quadruple an applicant's chances of admission. "White people were being ushered in on the basis of privilege, not necessarily fairness or merit," *Hechinger Report* columnist Andre Perry observed.

Harvard has consistently maintained that race is one only piece of a much larger picture at a student body so competitive that only 1,962 students out of a record-high 57,435 applicants were admitted for the class of 2025 — the lowest admissions rate ever for what Harvard calls the most diverse class in its history. Asian Americans make up 25.3 percent of incoming students, compared with 14.2 percent

who are Black and 11.7 percent who identify as Latino.

Speculation about what could happen if affirmative action disappears has been discussed, debated and opined upon for years. For her part, Kella worries about what campuses like hers will look like for coming generations if race is no longer a part of admissions decisions.

"It will really do an injustice to students," said Kella, who is a member of the Harvard South Asian Association, a client of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund in the case. "A lot of us have been very fortunate to learn from different world views."

*Liz Willen is the editor in chief for the Hechinger Report. This story about affirmative action in college admissions was produced by The Hechinger Report, a nonprofit, independent news organization focused on inequality and innovation in education.*

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## Medicare/Esp

gratuitas caseras para covid. Eventualmente, mil millones de pruebas estarán disponibles. Cada residencia inicialmente puede recibir cuatro pruebas.

Cuatro pruebas están muy lejos de las ocho mensuales que se les pueden reembolsar a las personas con un seguro privado, pero es mejor que nada, dicen expertos, especialmente cuando prevenir la propagación de covid requiere repetir las pruebas durante un período de días.

"Cuatro pruebas no son muchas pruebas", dijo Juliette Cubanski, subdirectora del programa de

políticas de Medicare en KFF. "Esta es una de las poblaciones en mayor riesgo, y no tener la oportunidad de comprar pruebas para el hogar y recibir un reembolso pone a toda esta población en desventaja".

La administración Biden también está proporcionando hasta 50 millones de pruebas caseras adicionales gratuitas a centros de salud comunitarios y clínicas de salud certificadas por Medicare.

Pero 50 millones de pruebas ni siquiera proporcionarán una prueba a cada uno de los 62 millones de beneficiarios de Medicare, dijo Lipschutz.

Alrededor de cuatro de cada 10 beneficiarios de Medicare están en planes de atención administrada de Medicare Advantage. Estos planes privados pueden ofrecer pruebas gratuitas en el hogar a los miembros, pero no es obligatorio. Cada afiliado debe consultar con su plan para ver si ofrece esta opción.

#### ¿Qué otras opciones gratuitas de pruebas para covid están disponibles para los beneficiarios de Medicare?

En el Medicare Original, puede obtener pruebas de diagnóstico rápido

de antígeno o PCR sin pagar nada de su bolsillo si la prueba la ordena un médico u otro proveedor de atención médica, y la realiza un laboratorio.

El gobierno federal ha establecido más de 10,000 sitios de pruebas gratuitas en farmacias a lo largo de todo el país que los beneficiarios de Medicare también pueden visitar.

Con la reciente extensión de la emergencia de salud pública, la situación es fluida y los beneficiarios de Medicare aún pueden obtener una cobertura para las pruebas de covid caseras que es

comparable a la que tienen ahora las personas con seguro privado.

"Todo esto es un objetivo en movimiento", dijo Lipschutz.

*Michelle Andrews es escritora colaboradora de Kaiser Health News. Esta historia fue producida por Kaiser Health News, un programa editorialmente independiente de la Kaiser Family Foundation que no está relacionado con Kaiser Permanente.*

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- Dr. Rusha Lev, Pediatrician in Denver & Parent  
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Medicare

"So there's a little bit of a question of where this type of benefit would fit," Schwarz said.

People in private plans sometimes pay upfront for services and then are reimbursed by their health plan. But that's not how Medicare works. The program pays providers, not beneficiaries. So that's another wrinkle that would have to be ironed out.

**Q: So how can a Medicare beneficiary get free at-home covid tests?**

There are a couple of options. This week, the Biden administration launched a website, [covidtests.gov](https://www.covidtests.gov), where anyone, including Medicare beneficiaries, can order free at-home covid tests. One billion tests eventually will be available. Each residence initially can receive four tests.

Four tests is a far cry from the eight monthly tests that people with private insurance can be reimbursed for. But it's better than nothing, experts say, especially when preventing the spread of covid requires repeated testing over a period of days.

"Four tests is not a lot of tests," said Juliette Cubanski, deputy director of the program on Medicare policy at KFF. "This is one of the most at-risk populations, and to not have the opportunity to buy at-home tests and get reimbursed puts this whole population on their back foot."

The Biden administration is also providing up to 50 million additional free at-home tests to community health centers and Medicare-certified health clinics.

But 50 million tests won't even provide one test apiece to the 62

million Medicare beneficiaries, Lipschutz said.

About 4 in 10 Medicare beneficiaries are in Medicare Advantage managed-care plans. These private plans may offer free at-home tests to members, but it's not required. Enrollees should check with their plans to see whether that's an option.

**Q: What other free covid testing options are available to Medicare beneficiaries?**

In traditional Medicare, beneficiaries can get rapid antigen or PCR diagnostic tests without paying anything out-of-pocket if the test is ordered by a doctor or other health care provider and performed by a lab.

The federal government has set up more than 10,000 free pharmacy testing sites across the

country that Medicare beneficiaries can visit as well.

With the recent extension of the public health emergency, the situation is fluid, and Medicare beneficiaries may yet get coverage for at-home covid tests that's comparable to what privately insured people now have.

"This is all a moving target," Lipschutz said.

*Michelle Andrews is a Contributing Writer for Kaiser Health News, a nonprofit news service covering health issues. It is an editorially independent program of the Kaiser Family Foundation, which is not affiliated with Kaiser Permanente.*

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Migrants

now await their legal fate in Mexico. "Some people have been here for 16 months," Ascencio says.

Migrants get just one meal a day at a nearby soup kitchen, so they must find ways to earn an income for basic needs. For the artisans, embroidered mantas bring in some money for bus fare, groceries, and personal hygiene products. Their craft is sold online and at festival venues north of the border. On a recent day, Ascencio stood behind a kitchen table, folding a stack of finished mantas that James would take to Arizona—as she and other volunteers have done for about two years.

Now well-established, Bordando Esperanza soon will move in a new direction. Manta-makers and project coordinators in Nogales are working to develop a self-sustaining co-op model to create a market for the migrants' handiwork.

A few miles from the bus station, at Casa de la Misericordia migrant shelter, a 2-acre property atop a hill, project participants stitch multihued threads onto square pieces of fabric. When they're not cooking or cleaning, migrants often embroider at outdoor tables, where they have a bird's-eye view of tract housing similar to dwellings built for workers in American-owned maquiladoras, factories that assemble electronics and other products for export.

Beatriz Alvarado began to create mantas soon after arriving at the shelter nearly a year ago. Although the 26-year-old did not embroider at home in El Salvador, she soon picked up the intricacies of the work from the other artisans.

Like many asylum seekers frustrated with having to wait in Mexico for long periods, she sneaked across the border with her 9-year-old daughter. People smugglers separated mother and daughter, and while the girl made it to Florida and is staying with relatives, U.S. authorities caught Alvarado and sent her back to Mexico. Torn by circumstances that keep her apart from her daughter in the U.S. and her husband and 5-year-old daughter in El Salvador, Alvarado turns to embroidery for some respite.

On a recent afternoon, Alvarado was in the shelter's kitchen gathering ingredients for the Salvadoran pupusas she would make the next day, when it would be her turn to cook. On a break from her chores, she showed off a cellphone picture of a manta embroidered with a pastoral scene reminiscent of her homeland. There's beauty in El Salvador, she says, but criminal elements make it difficult for law-abiding citizens to live peacefully. Alvarado left her country, she explains, because a gang member who charged her a fee so she could sell garments in her mother's neighborhood threatened to kill her when she refused to keep paying. At the shelter, when her mind wanders to those days, she pulls out a manta and starts stitching. "Embroidering helps me to destress, to not spend so much time thinking about my situation and about the long wait," she says.

Alvarado's handiwork will be part of a national traveling exhibition of 75 mantas that will be on display at churches and schools

in cities across the United States beginning next year. Its first public showing began on Jan. 15 at the Good Shepherd United Church of Christ in Sahuarita, Arizona. Any funds raised through the exhibition and donations will support the project for artisans on the border and other migrants who now await resolution of their asylum cases in the U.S., James says. As the No-

“We can't return home. I want my children to be safe, to have a good life.”  
Sandra Vázquez

gales co-op develops, James and other project volunteers in Arizona will focus on educational events in the United States. Their goal is to increase understanding about migration to a country that still holds a promise of hope for many, even in the midst of border restrictions intended to keep rising numbers of migrants out.

At Casa de la Misericordia, shelter director Alma Angélica Macías Mejía has seen the calming effect embroidering has on asylum seekers. The craft flourished after several women who were already creating mantas elsewhere came in last year after the pandemic forced smaller shelters to take in fewer migrants. Strict protocols kept the coronavirus at bay, even as the population in the shelter, mostly from Central America, swelled to

nearly 300 migrants, the director says.

Embroidering helped the first manta-makers get through the worst of the pandemic and waits of up to a year and a half, she says. "They would go under the trees and other outdoor spaces, and it was as if they were family. They shared their stories, they talked about what each one of them was going through, and they encouraged each other."

Most of those asylum seekers have since moved to the United States to wait for immigration court hearings, and now a different group of artisans among the 120 migrants at the shelter carry on the manta-making tradition. They work closely with project coordinator Ana Delia Chavarín, who offers guidance and makes sure to keep embroidery and crochet supplies fully stocked.

Back at the bus-station-turned-shelter, Sandra Vázquez concentrates on the repetitive rhythms that create lines and shapes on fabric, taking her mind back to the days her grandmother taught her to embroider. She was 12 then, just a year younger than her own daughter is now. The two often sit together on the old metal bench, stitching mantas and waiting for news about their asylum request.

*Lourdes Medrano is an independent journalist in southern Arizona. This article is republished from YES! Magazine under a Creative Commons license.*

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## Rights

Cutter, the Dakota Ridge Democrat who chairs the Democratic Women's Caucus of Colorado, said at a [Wednesday news conference](#). The caucus is promoting the abortion rights bill as part of its legislative agenda.

"We are taking action so that people can get the abortion care they need, raise their families in safety and live in thriving communities, and it's going to take all of us working together," Cutter said.

**Abortion rights in danger**

With [90 new laws](#) that seek to restrict abortion in 18 other states, supporters of the bill want to bring peace of mind to Colorado's communities of color and LGBTQ people, Bolaños Perea said.

"We are part of this movement for reproductive justice and abortion access because the folks that are impacted are people that we know, are stories that we share," she said. "We must reclaim our power and rebuild our movement again, and we know that it's going to take a lot of strength."

In December, the Supreme Court heard oral arguments in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, a case concerning Mississippi's ban on abortions after 15 weeks of pregnancy. That's about two weeks earlier than what's currently permit-

ted under *Roe v. Wade*, which established the right to abortion after fetal viability — in other words, the point at which a fetus can survive outside the womb.

If the court upholds Mississippi's ban, that could lead to a reconsideration of *Roe v. Wade*. The Supreme Court currently has a 6-3 conservative majority.

Previously, the *Roe v. Wade* decision was seen as a "floor" for abortion rights in the U.S., Froelich said. The upcoming bill "sets the floor" in case the decision is overturned. "Judging from recent (Supreme Court) decisions and oral arguments," she added, "I think we're seeing that we're going to be living in a post-*Roe* world."

Legislatures in 22 states, throughout much of the Midwest and South, would probably move to ban or greatly restrict abortion should the Supreme Court overturn *Roe v. Wade*, according to an [analysis by the New York Times](#). So, other states, such as Colorado, are seeking to shore up abortion rights in order to let it be known where they stand on the issue.

Two other states, [Virginia](#) and [Oregon](#), have passed reproductive rights laws that are similar to the Colorado bill, Bolaños Perea said.

Besides writing reproductive rights into state law, the bill being

drafted would prohibit any personhood rights from being assigned to embryos or fetuses. Colorado voters overwhelmingly rejected constitutional amendments in 2008, 2010 and 2014 that would have assigned certain legal rights associated with "personhood" to the unborn.

The bill will use gender-neutral language when talking about pregnant people, to make sure Colorado laws are inclusive of the LGBTQ community.

If Colorado's reproductive rights bill passes, it would theoretically still be possible — given the political will — to pass a new law banning or greatly restricting abortion, assuming *Roe v. Wade* is overturned. But that would be extremely unlikely without a conservative takeover of all levels of state government.

**Republicans introduce anti-abortion bills**

While Democratic lawmakers generally work to protect and expand abortion rights, Republicans typically introduce at least one bill each year seeking to restrict them. Such Republican bills are largely symbolic in Colorado, since the party is in the minority in the House and Senate and the governor is a Democrat.

Earlier this month, Castle Rock Republican Rep. Patrick Neville in-

troduced [House Bill 22-1047](#). The long-shot bill would prohibit most abortions with no exceptions for rape or incest. Under the proposed law, doctors who performed an illegal abortion would be guilty of a class 1 felony. Pregnant people would not be subject to criminal penalties.

Abortions would be legal only if "designed or intended to prevent the death of a pregnant mother," if the doctor made "reasonable medical efforts" to save the lives of both mother and child; or if medical treatment such as chemotherapy or removal of an ectopic pregnancy resulted in an accidental abortion.

Rep. Dave Williams, a Republican from Colorado Springs, went further. His [House Bill 22-1079](#), introduced Jan. 20, would define a person to include an unborn child under state laws relating to civil courts, homicide and assault, thus prohibiting abortion at all stages of pregnancy, with no explicit exceptions for rape, incest or saving the mother's life.

The bill would require judges to prosecute abortions as murder cases without regard for Supreme Court decisions. Any Colorado judge who tried to enjoin, stay, overrule or void the bill would be subject to impeachment or removal.

Republican Rep. Stephanie

Luck of Cañon City introduced [House Bill 22-1075](#), which would require abortion providers to report non-identifying information about women who obtain abortions to the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment. Doctors and nurses that failed to submit the required information could be subject to discipline.

The state registrar of vital statistics would have to create an annual report summarizing the information on women who obtain abortions. While the report itself would be publicly available, the raw data submitted by abortion providers would be restricted.

None of the Republican-led bills is likely to pass. However, Colorado requires that all bills introduced by state lawmakers get a committee hearing with the opportunity for members of the public to testify. Hearing dates will be posted on the [Colorado General Assembly's website](#).

*Reporter Faith Miller covers the Colorado Legislature, immigration and other stories for Colorado Newsline. This article is republished from Colorado Newsline under a Creative Commons license.*

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mis hijos estén a salvo, que tengan una buena vida".

La familia de Vázquez es una de las 14 de México, Guatemala y Honduras que se alojan en el recinto de la estación de autobuses, dice Norma Ascencio, que trabaja allí y supervisa el proyecto de bordado. A poca distancia de un puerto de entrada a EE.UU., la estación se convirtió a lo largo de los años en un lugar de reunión para los migrantes mexicanos que fueron deportados de EE.UU. y, más recientemente, para muchos centroamericanos y otros solicitantes de asilo que ahora deben esperar su destino legal en México. "Algunos llevan aquí 16 meses", dice Ascencio.

Los emigrantes sólo reciben una comida al día en un comedor social cercano, por lo que deben encontrar la forma de obtener ingresos para cubrir sus necesidades básicas. Para los artesanos, las mantas bordadas aportan algo de dinero para el billete de autobús, la comida y los productos de higiene personal. Su artesanía se vende por Internet y en festivales al norte de la frontera. Un día reciente, Ascencio estaba detrás de una mesa de cocina, doblando una pila de mantas terminadas que James llevaría a Arizona, como ella y otros voluntarios han hecho durante unos dos años.

Bordando Esperanza, ahora bien establecido, pronto tomará una nueva dirección. Los fabricantes de mantas y los coordinadores del proyecto en Nogales están trabajando en el desarrollo de un modelo de cooperativa autosuficiente para crear un mercado para las artesanías de los migrantes.

A pocos kilómetros de la estación de autobuses, en la Casa de la Misericordia, una propiedad de dos acres en la cima de una colina, los participantes en el proyecto cosen hilos multicolores en piezas cuadradas de tela. Cuando no están cocinando o limpiando, los migrantes suelen bordar en mesas al aire libre, donde tienen una vista de pájaro de las viviendas construidas para los trabajadores de las maquiladoras de propiedad estadounidense, fábricas que ensamblan productos electrónicos y otros productos para la exportación.

Beatriz Alvarado comenzó a crear mantas poco después de llegar al refugio hace casi un año. Aunque esta joven de 26 años no bordaba en su casa de El Salvador, pronto aprendió las complejidades del trabajo de las otras artesanas. Al igual que muchos solicitantes de asilo frustrados por tener que

esperar en México durante mucho tiempo, cruzó la frontera a escondidas con su hija de 9 años. Los traficantes de personas separaron a madre e hija, y mientras la niña llegó a Florida y se aloja en casa de unos familiares, las autoridades estadounidenses capturaron a Alvarado y la enviaron de vuelta a México. Desgarrada por las circunstancias que la separan de su hija en Estados Unidos y de su marido y su hija de 5 años en El Salvador, Alvarado recurre al bordado para encontrar un respiro.

“No podemos volver a casa. Quiero que mis hijos estén a salvo, que tengan una buena vida.”  
Sandra Vázquez

Una tarde reciente, Alvarado estaba en la cocina del refugio reuniendo ingredientes para las pupusas salvadoreñas que haría al día siguiente, cuando le tocaba cocinar. En un descanso de sus tareas, mostró una foto de móvil de una manta bordada con una escena pastoral que recuerda a su tierra natal. Hay belleza en El Salvador, dice, pero los elementos criminales dificultan que los ciudadanos respetuosos de la ley vivan en paz. Alvarado abandonó su país, explica, porque un pandillero que le cobraba una cuota para poder vender prendas en el barrio de su madre la amenazó con matarla cuando se negó a seguir pagando. En el refugio, cuando su mente se traslada a esos días, saca una manta y se pone a coser. "Bordar me ayuda a desestresarme, a no pasar tanto tiempo pensando en mi situación y en la larga espera", dice.

La obra de Alvarado formará parte de una exposición nacional itinerante de 75 mantas que se exhibirán en iglesias y escuelas de ciudades de todo Estados Unidos a partir del año que viene. Su primera exposición pública comenzó el 15 de enero en la Iglesia Unida de Cristo del Buen Pastor, en Sahuarita (Arizona). Los fondos que se recauden a través de la exposición y las donaciones servirán para apoyar el proyecto de los artesanos de la frontera y de otros migrantes que ahora esperan la resolución de sus casos de asilo en Estados Unidos, dice James. Mientras se desarrolla la cooperativa de Nogales, James y otros voluntarios del proyecto en Arizona se centrarán en eventos educativos en Estados Unidos. Su objetivo es aumentar la compren-

sión de la migración a un país que todavía es una promesa de esperanza para muchos, incluso en medio de las restricciones fronterizas destinadas a mantener un número creciente de migrantes fuera.

En la Casa de la Misericordia, la directora del albergue, Alma Angélica Macías Mejía, ha comprobado el efecto tranquilizador que tiene el bordado en los solicitantes de asilo. La artesanía floreció después de que varias mujeres que ya creaban mantas en otros lugares llegaron el año pasado después de que la pandemia obligara a los refugios más pequeños a acoger a menos migrantes. Los estrictos protocolos mantuvieron a raya el coronavirus, incluso cuando la población del refugio, procedente en su mayoría de Centroamérica, aumentó hasta casi 300 migrantes, afirma la directora.

Bordar ayudó a los primeros manteros a superar lo peor de la pandemia y las esperas de hasta un año y medio, dice. "Se ponían bajo los árboles y otros espacios al aire libre, y era como si estuvieran en familia. Compartían sus historias, hablaban de lo que cada uno estaba pasando y se animaban mutuamente".

La mayoría de esos solicitantes de asilo se han trasladado desde entonces a Estados Unidos para esperar las audiencias del tribunal de inmigración, y ahora un grupo diferente de artesanos entre los 120 migrantes del refugio continúa con la tradición de hacer manta. Trabajan en estrecha colaboración con la coordinadora del proyecto, Ana Delia Chavarín, que les orienta y se asegura de mantener los suministros de bordado y ganchillo bien abastecidos.

De vuelta a la estación de autobuses convertida en refugio, Sandra Vázquez se concentra en los ritmos repetitivos que crean líneas y formas en la tela, retrocediendo a los días en que su abuela le enseñó a bordar. Entonces tenía 12 años, sólo un año menos que su propia hija. Las dos se sientan a menudo juntas en el viejo banco de metal, cosiendo mantas y esperando noticias sobre su solicitud de asilo.

**Lourdes Medrano es periodista independiente en el sur de Arizona. ¡Este artículo ha sido publicado por YES! Magazine bajo una licencia Creative Commons.**

**Traducido por Juan Carlos Uribe-The Weekly Issue/El Semanario.**

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practices, two-thirds of surveyed workers couldn't afford basic monthly expenses, 39% couldn't afford groceries, and 14% have experienced homelessness in the past year.

Meanwhile, the company's top brass has thrived during the Covid-19 pandemic, especially CEO Rodney McMullen. After receiving a large bonus in 2020, his total compensation that year reached \$22.4 million, which was 909 times what the median worker earned.

Furthermore, Sanders' staff director Warren Gunnels pointed out Monday night, Kroger spent more than \$1.5 billion on stock buybacks between April 2020 and July 2021 "to enrich its wealthy shareholders."

Workers at King Soopers, Gunnels noted, responded by standing up and fighting back.

Union members at King Soopers grocery stores in Colorado

**Prioridades**

Jóvenes. Ese proyecto de ley no está en la agenda del gobernador para esta sesión, pero la senadora Antoinette Sedillo López lo presentó el 18 de enero.

La lista bordada de víctimas de la violencia policial está incompleta por ahora, dijo Batrezechavez.

El trabajo en los nombres continuará en eventos mensuales en Albuquerque llamados Hook It Up Sundays, dijo Batrezechavez. Es una manera de hablar con los miembros de la comunidad más acerca de quiénes eran estas personas, y para mantener el espacio para ellos. También reparten comida gratis e intercambian agujas.

"Tiene que haber algún tipo de reconocimiento para estos individuos, no pueden perderse en decir simplemente 'esto es un número'", dijo Batrezechavez. "Porque muchos de estos individuos, esta violencia fue promulgada sobre ellos, y sus historias no se conocen, sobre lo que pasó, sobre sus familias y cómo están sufriendo. Tenemos que ser capaces de reconocer los nombres tal y como son".

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Springs, Pueblo, Grand Junction, and Northern Colorado will have an opportunity to vote on the same contract in the coming days, the Sun reported.

“From the beginning of this process, we promised our members that we would procure the very best contract we could.”  
Kim Cordova, United Food and Commercial Workers

**Kenny Stancil is a staff writer for Common Dreams. This article is republished from Common Dreams under a Creative Commons license.**

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**Insurance**

consumer advocacy group. "All of those things help people stay covered."

States that run their own exchanges often extend the deadline for signing up another week or two to give late-comers extra time. But it's not clear whether any other states will follow Colorado's example and provide a two-month or longer window in response to the omicron surge.

"Without the fires, I'm not sure that they would be thinking about it," Conway said.

**Markian Hawryluk is the senior Colorado correspondent for Kaiser Health News, based in Denver. Kaiser Health News, a nonprofit news service covering health issues. It is an editorially independent program of the Kaiser Family Foundation, which is not affiliated with Kaiser Permanente.**

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Escuelas

el trabajo en septiembre, diciendo que el distrito necesitaba centrarse en la recuperación de la pandemia.

En noviembre, Marrero descartó la lista de 19 escuelas y cambió el enfoque del distrito. En lugar de convocar a grupos regionales para que hicieran recomendaciones sobre el cierre de escuelas específicas, el distrito formaría un único comité para establecer criterios comunes para el cierre que pudieran aplicarse a cualquier escuela con poca matrícula. A principios de este mes, las escuelas concertadas independientes del distrito -que matriculan al 23% de los alumnos de Denver- aceptaron participar también.

El distrito lanzó una página web y abrió el proceso de solicitud el viernes pasado para lo que llama el Comité Asesor de Matriculación Descendente. Los estudiantes, los familiares, los profesores, los directores, los miembros de grupos de

defensa de la comunidad y los ex alumnos de todo tipo de escuelas están invitados a solicitarlo.

Marrero dijo que el distrito se ha comprometido a garantizar que el comité sea racialmente representativo de las Escuelas Públicas de Denver, donde tres cuartas partes de los estudiantes son estudiantes de color, y que haya miembros de todas las regiones de la ciudad.

La semana pasada, los miembros de la junta directiva dijeron que es importante que el comité se extienda más allá de los "sospechosos habituales", es decir, los padres y los grupos comunitarios que ya prestan mucha atención a la política del distrito, hablan con frecuencia en las reuniones de la junta directiva y tienen contactos con los responsables de la toma de decisiones.

Pidieron al distrito que encontrara la manera de distribuir la solicitud del comité a las familias que no

tienen acceso a Internet y a las que hablan idiomas menos comunes, como el nepalí y el árabe.

"He servido en estos comités", dijo la miembro de la junta Michelle Quattlebaum, una madre y ex alumna elegida para la junta en noviembre. "Sé cómo son, y sé quiénes son las voces más fuertes, y sólo quiero asegurarme de que estamos apuntando realmente a quien necesita estar en la sala, a quien debería estar allí, y no sólo a quien quiere tener el control".

*Melanie Asmar es reportera senior de Chalkbeat, una organización de noticias sin ánimo de lucro que cubre la educación pública. Esta historia fue publicada originalmente por Chalkbeat.*

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School

month, the district's independent charter schools — which enroll 23% of Denver students — agreed to participate as well.

The district launched a webpage and opened the application process last Friday for what it's calling the Declining Enrollment Advisory Committee. Students, family members, teachers, principals, community advocacy group members, and alumni from all types of schools are invited to apply.

Marrero said the district is committed to ensuring the committee is racially representative of Denver Public Schools, where three-quarters of students are students of color, and that there are members from all regions of the city. Elementary schools in the southwest, northwest, and central parts of the

city have been particularly hard hit by declining enrollment.

Much of the discussion so far has been about elementary schools, but Marrero said last week that the new criteria would apply to middle schools as well. Smaller cohorts of elementary students have begun transitioning into middle school, district data shows.

Last week, board members said that it's important the committee extend beyond "the usual suspects," meaning the parents and community groups that already pay close attention to district policy, speak frequently at board meetings, and have inroads with decision-makers.

They requested the district find ways to distribute the committee application to families without internet access and those who

speak less common languages such as Nepali and Arabic.

"I've served on these committees," said board member Michelle Quattlebaum, a parent and alumna elected to the board in November. "I know what they look like, and I know who the loudest voices are, and I just want to make sure that we are actually targeting who needs to be in the room, who should be there, and not just who wants to be in control."

*Melanie Asmar is a senior reporter with Chalkbeat, a nonprofit news organization covering public education. This story was originally published by Chalkbeat.*

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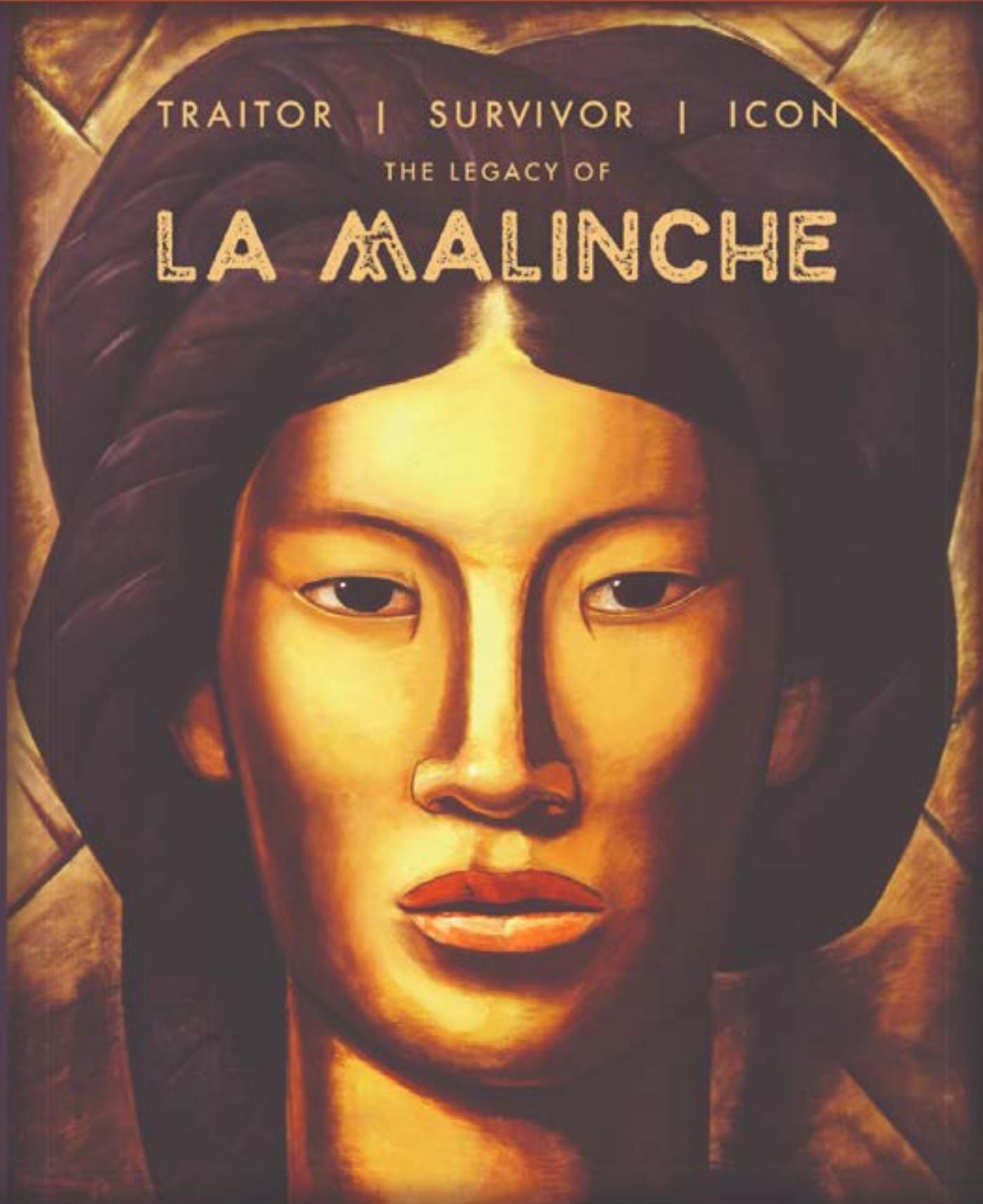
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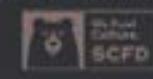


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