

March 16, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden  
 President of the United States  
 Office of the President  
 VIA EMAIL

**RE: Endorsing Félix Sánchez for Federal Communications Commissioner or Chair**

Mr. President,

The National Hispanic Leadership Agenda (NHLA), composed of over 40 of the nation’s leading Latino civil rights and public policy organizations, has voted to strongly recommend that you nominate Félix Sánchez to serve as Chair or Democratic Commissioner on the U.S. Federal Communications Commission (FCC). He is poised to hit the ground running because he has no business or professional conflicts of interest, which means he will not have to recuse himself on any matter that comes before the Commission.

**a. Equity and democracy demand a Hispanic FCC Commissioner**

Only three Latinos—all Democrats—have ever served on the FCC. It has been 20 years since the last one, Gloria Tristani, ended her term. Since then, much of FCC-licensed Spanish-language media, especially radio,<sup>1</sup> has become a source of disinformation, news distortions, white supremacy and conspiracy mongering; a situation which many argue has broadly impacted voter beliefs with result-altering consequences in Florida in 2020. It is time that the FCC take Spanish-language media seriously. The FCC needs a Hispanic commissioner who cannot be blinded by language barriers.

The FCC’s gross dereliction of duty on its own News Distortion Doctrine is universal, not just limited to Spanish-language media. In fact, “the FCC has reviewed [only] eight complaints involving the Doctrine since 1999 [and] concluded in all these cases that there was insufficient evidence of news distortion.”<sup>2</sup> But universality of the problem is not the same as equality of the harms. American consumers of Spanish-language media are particularly vulnerable because they lack the more robust fact-checking and falsity-debunking websites and tools that are available in English. The FCC needs to take a hard look at

<sup>1</sup> See, Lautaro Grinspan, [Latino leaders call out Trump disinformation campaign in Miami Spanish-language media](#) (Miami Herald, Jan 16, 2021). See, Carmen Sesin, [Florida groups call out Spanish-language radio shows for spreading lies, misinformation](#) (NBC News, Jan, 15, 2021). See, Patricia Mazzei and Jennifer Medina, [False Political News in Spanish Pits Latino Voters Against Black Lives Matter](#) (The New York Times, updated Oct. 29, 2020). See, Laura Hazard Owen, [Spanish-language misinformation is flourishing — and often hidden. Is help on the way?](#) (Harvard NiemanLab, Sep. 18, 2020).

<sup>2</sup> Charles L. Bonani, *Weapons of Mass Distortion: Applying the Principles of the FCC’s News Distortion Doctrine to Undisclosed Financial Conflicts of Interest in Corporate News Media’s Military Coverage*, 27 Wash. & Lee J. Civ. Rts. & Soc. Just. 231, 238 (2020).

- Alianza Americas
- American G.I. Forum
- ASPIRA Association
- AVANCE Inc.
- Casa de Esperanza: National Latin@ Network
- Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute
- Farmworker Justice
- GreenLatinos
- Hispanic Association of Colleges & Universities
- Hispanic Federation
- Hispanic National Bar Association
- Hispanics in Philanthropy
- Inter-University Program for Latino Research
- Labor Council for Latin American Advancement
- LatinoJustice PRLDEF
- League of United Latin American Citizens
- MANA, A National Latina Organization
- Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund
- Mi Familia Vota
- NALEO Education Fund
- National Association of Hispanic Federal Executives
- National Association of Latino Arts and Culture
- National Association of Latino Independent Producers
- National Conference of Puerto Rican Women, Inc.
- National Day Laborer Organizing Network
- National Hispanic Caucus of State Legislators
- National Hispanic Council on Aging
- National Hispanic Foundation for the Arts
- National Hispanic Media Coalition
- National Hispanic Medical Association
- National Institute for Latino Policy
- National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health
- National Latinx Psychological Association
- Presente.org
- SER Jobs for Progress National
- Southwest Voter Registration Education Project
- U.S.- Mexico Foundation
- UnidosUS
- United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
- United States Hispanic Leadership Institute
- United States-Mexico Chamber of Commerce
- Voto Latino

the fact that its rules, or lack thereof, make it almost impossible for gross news distortions to have any negative consequences for licensees.<sup>3</sup>

Due to income disparities, Latinos are also particularly impacted by the FCC's lifeline program and the lack of a broadband subsidy. Latinos, who are the bulk of America's agricultural workers, also need rural broadband for their families. Finally, as the demographic most likely to use wireless to access the internet, Latinos need an FCC that understands the need for fast, broad and equitable access to 5G in all communities in the United States.

### **b. Félix Sánchez is well-qualified and a consensus candidate**

An attorney since 1980, and the lead advocate for the National Hispanic Foundation for the Arts (NHFA) since 1997, Félix Sánchez has co-chaired NHFA's Media Committee for well-over a decade.

His first job in Washington in the mid-1980's as a legislative assistant to then-U.S. Senator Lloyd Bentsen, focused on advising on Commerce Committee matters, including FCC regulatory issues. He left that position to become first Latino to serve as National Deputy Campaign Manager for a major presidential campaign (Paul Simon) and then joined the Dukakis/Bentsen campaign originating the first Latino celebrity engagement/outreach effort, known as a fly-around. After an 8-year hiatus working for the energy industry, he returned his focus to media and communications in 1995 and has, since then, provided formal comments, filings and advice to FCC chairs and commissioners with a view in how those policies affect Latinos. He has spoken on net neutrality, promoted diverse employment and ownership in media, and minority media entrepreneurship. On behalf of NHFA, he has worked to create greater accessibility and affordability to communications services and supported modernizing infrastructure rules that can streamline 5G build-out as well as supported next-gen networks.

Sánchez led NHFA's fight to desegregate and dismantle the decades-long institutional racism at the Kennedy Center Honors which resulted in the systematic exclusion of Latino artists from the prestigious annual awards. His work resulted in major administrative and personnel changes at the Kennedy Center that lead to the recognition of Latino Kennedy Center Honorees. Félix was also the force behind convincing NBC's Saturday Night Live to hire its first Latina cast member, Melissa Villaseñor.

Sánchez has advised Democratic presidential campaigns since he first worked formally in them in 1988. For the Clinton campaign in 1992 and 1996, and Gore campaign in 2000, he duplicated his Latino-celebrity fly-around. For the Obama campaign, he facilitated a Florida event that featured former President Clinton, then-candidate Obama and former TV POTUS Jimmy Smits (The West Wing). In 2020, he supported Hispanic social media and video voter outreach strategies in key Presidential battleground states.

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<sup>3</sup> See, Hammond, Allen, et al. Communications Law in the Public Interest. 139. United States, Wolters Kluwer, 2020. (Explaining that the FCC has never codified its statement that "rigging or slanting the news is a most heinous act against the public interest" using only its own precedent, and that evidentiary requirements include direct knowledge of intentional falsification or "evidence of the direction to employees to station management to falsify the news.").

Sánchez serves on a number of advisory boards: the American Jewish Committee’s (AJC) Latino Jewish Leadership Council; the Kennedy Center’s Latino Advisory Board; the West Side Story Community Advisory Board; the El Rey Network’s Diversity Council; the Quinnipiac University, School of Communications advisory Council; the Creative Thread Foundation; and Storytelling Unbound. Félix has also advised the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, the Congressional Multicultural Media Caucus; and the Congressional Caucus for Advancement of Studio, Talent (CAST) on Latino and multicultural diversity and inclusion issues in the entertainment industry. Sánchez’s work on behalf of NHFA has been honored by the National Association of Latino Independent Producers (NALIP) and the Government of Mexico, which granted him its highest national honor presented to Mexican American and Latino philanthropy leaders, the Ohtlí Award.

Sánchez has a B.A. in Psychology and an M.A. in Curriculum & Instruction from The University of Texas at Austin; he also holds a law degree from the University of Houston Law Center. His daughter Isabella is a recent summa cum laude graduate from Boston University, who now works in publishing; his son, Philippe is a 2020 graduate from the U.S. Military Academy—West Point, now stationed at Ft. Benning, Georgia.

NHLA can attest to Félix Sánchez’s long-standing advocacy and public policy work in media at the national level, together with his stalwart and lifelong support of Democratic Presidential nominees, along with his legal, legislative and regulatory experience, and lack of conflicts of interest, which make him an outstanding and singular candidate for Democratic FCC Commissioner or FCC Chair.

Sincerely,



Thomas A. Saenz  
Chair, National Hispanic Leadership Agenda  
President & General Counsel  
Mexican American Legal Defense and  
Educational Fund (MALDEF)



Brenda Victoria Castillo  
NHLA Media Committee Co-Chair  
President & CEO  
National Hispanic Media Coalition (NHMC)



Kenneth Romero  
NHLA Government Accountability Co-Chair  
Executive Director, National Hispanic Caucus  
of State Legislators (NHCSL)



Al Gallegos  
NHLA Government Accountability Co-Chair  
President, National Association of Hispanic  
Executives (NAHFE)