



7 February 2022

Metropolitan Beaches Commission
Massachusetts State House
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Chairman Crighton, Chairman Madaro, and Honorable Members of the Metropolitan Beaches Commission:

Please accept this letter as written testimony from Latino Outdoors Massachusetts, on the matter of language barriers that make it difficult for people to safely enjoy the Commonwealth's beaches. Latino Outdoors is an organization creating a world where Latino communities enjoy nature as a safe, inclusive and welcoming place.

The removal of language barriers is an important issue that is worthy of consideration and merits the attention of the Legislature and the Department of Conservation and Recreation. According to the 2020 census, the Latino population in the Commonwealth is now estimated to be 12.6%, or 887,000. Spanish is the second most spoken non-English language, with roughly 9.6% of the population being considered native Spanish speakers.

Language barriers isolate communities, limit public understanding about open spaces like beaches, present public health and safety risks. Furthermore language barriers promote societal injustices and institutional inequities. As the Commonwealth moves to create a future, it must be a future for all. This must include historically marginalized communities, who's input must be heard and received.

Historically, Latino communities have not been included or welcomed in environmental and outdoors conversations, and continue to face biases and preconceived notions about who should and should not be welcomed in open spaces. Therefore it is the unequivocal position of Latino Outdoors Massachusetts, that more efforts should be made to make the Commonwealth's beaches more inclusive and therefore more accessible to all residents. The first step is ensuring that public postings and informational signage be shared in multilingual formats. While Spanish is the second most spoken language in the Commonwealth, we urge this Commission to also make recommendations promoting signage in Portuguese, Standard Chinese, Haitian Creole, Vietnamese, Khmer, Cape Verdean, Russian, Arabic, and Korean. The Department of Public Health has determined that these are languages most frequently spoken in Massachusetts, by First Language is not English identifying

individuals. Additionally, we suggest that it is in the best interest of the Commonwealth that this Commission recommend meaningful, and compensated partnerships with local organizations that work with Latino and non-English speaking communities, to promote equity and culturally appropriate interactions.

Latino Outdoors Massachusetts thanks the Metropolitan Beaches Commission for the opportunity to submit this testimony. Should you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact us.

Saludos Cordiales,

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