



Los Angeles County Supervisor
HILDA L. SOLIS
First District



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Supervisor Solis Honors Women Entrepreneurs in Women's History Month Celebration



LOS ANGELES, CA - Today, LA County Supervisor Hilda L. Solis, First District, hosted a Women's History Month Celebration to honor the persistence, perseverance, and hard work of women entrepreneurs across the First District.

Women entrepreneurs have sacrificed more time than men to undertake unpaid care during COVID-19, and their businesses have received less public support than those run by men. The National Bureau of Economic Research estimates that about 25% of women-owned businesses closed completely between February and April 2020, compared with about 20% of those owned by men. Additionally, according to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the number of female business owners who ranked their business's overall health as "somewhat or very good" fell 13 points during the pandemic, from 60% in January to 47% in July 2020. By contrast, the number of male business owners reporting a "good" business health status only fell five points in the same period – 67% to 62%. This uneven support has gone hand in hand with a greater risk of women-led businesses closing. To that end, economists have raised concerns that the COVID-19 pandemic could undo years of progress for women entrepreneurs.

"If there's one thing I know, it's that women small business owners are central to the health of our economy," said Supervisor Solis, who made history as the first Latina to serve in the Presidential Cabinet under President Barack Obama. "We knew that before COVID-19, and we certainly know that now. They've been the drivers of our economic recovery and resilience during COVID-19. Angelenos have found hope in their restaurants, boutiques, hair salons, and plant shops throughout the past two years and

to that end, I am proud to honor a diverse group of female entrepreneurs this Women's History Month."

Seeing the sacrifices that women of locally owned establishments had to undergo throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Supervisor Solis was captivated to recognize their resilience. The following small businesses that call the First District home were recognized during today's event: Nativo, XELAS, Alisol Flower & Discount Shop, Letty's Barbering and Cosmetology, Roxy's Taxes, El Pavo Bakery, Sara's Market, United Bread & Pastry, Andrea's Healthy Kitchen, Casa Blanca Mexican Restaurant, Latinx with Plants, Plant Love Food, Suay Sew Shop, Teresita's Restaurant, Cisele Handcrafted Leather, Absolute Security International, Inc., La Michoacana, El Sombrero, and Blooming Flowers & Gifts.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has been anything but business as usual for owners like me," said Corissa Hernandez, co-founder of Nativo and XELAS. "There have been a lot of obstacles, but what's helped me keep running is my family and the strength of my women employees. Many thanks to Supervisor Solis for empowering women of color entrepreneurs."

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic two years ago, the LA County Board of Supervisors has taken several actions to support women and small business owners. To help revive our economic engine, the Board of Supervisors allocated \$15 million to childcare and additional funding to childcare facilities through the County's federal CARES Act allocation. Additionally, they created the LA County Employer Assistance Grant Fund during 2021 to provide a total of \$500,000 to local businesses with individual businesses receiving up to \$10,000 based on demonstrated need – it was the first grant program of its kind in California. The Board also created the Worker Resiliency Fund to support workers who lost at least 50% of their income as a result of COVID-19 and for whom English is not their main language. Moreover, through the 'Great Plates Delivered' Initiative, small businesses in the restaurant, hospitality, and transportation industries were tapped to help prepare three home-delivered meals a day to adults over 60 at high-risk of contracting COVID-19.

"We know that women-owned businesses have been particularly hit hard during the pandemic, but their success is instrumental to our full and equitable economic recovery," said Kelly LoBianco, Executive Director of the Economic and Workforce Development branch of the LA County Department of Workforce Development, Aging and Community Services (WDACS). "I encourage small businesses to sign up for free PPE and test kits at ppeunite.org. And if you need free legal aid, please contact our Office of Small Business at 866-375-9511 or OSB@wdacs.lacounty.gov. Thank you, Supervisor Solis, for your many years of leadership in spearheading national and regional solutions and support for women-owned businesses."

Diana Diaz, founder of The Goddess Queer Mercado, a community that promotes entrepreneurship and creativity within our under-represented Latinx youth, provided inspirational remarks during the event program. Created by 14 local women in the City Terrace community of East LA in April 2021, The Goddess Mercado creates a permanent safe space where vendors and supporters can gather, meet, and celebrate each other. The Goddess Mercado gave birth to The Queer Mercado in July 2021 and The Goddess Mercado Boutique during October 2021.

"It's our responsibility to create opportunities and safe spaces like The Queer Mercado and The Goddess Mercado where marginalized communities can come together to celebrate creative expression, be inspired, build community as well as local entrepreneurship, and heal from the mental health crisis that is affecting many of our

families,” said Diana Diaz. “By increasing our visibility, we can increase tolerance, empower, educate, gain acceptance, and finally start healing.”

The event was hosted at the Grace T. Black Auditorium in the City of El Monte who also served as a partner for the event.

“It was an honor to collaborate with Supervisor Solis in hosting today’s event,” said Alma Martinez, El Monte City Manager. “As Women’s History Month comes to a close, it is critical that we recognize the importance of uplifting women entrepreneurs not just during the month of March, but all year-round. Thank you for dreaming big and allowing us to be customers of your magic.”

Today’s event marks the eighth occasion in which Supervisor Solis recognized Women’s History Month as LA County Supervisor for the First District, which spans from Eagle Rock to East LA to Pomona.

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