



Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute Blog
By Katherine Perez, 2018

My name is Katherine Perez, and I am a co-founder of The National Coalition for Latinxs with Disabilities (CNLD). CNLD is an organization comprised of self-advocates and allies from across the country dedicated to advancing the human rights of disabled Latinxs and providing a positive space for our community. Our leadership holds monthly meetings online, committee meetings more frequently, and we gather in person annually for our CNLD conference at different locations across the U.S. CNLD formed in 2016 in response to the co-founders' experiences not being adequately represented in either the Latinx or Disability spheres.

As an alumna of the CHCI Fellowship (2006-2007), it was my great pleasure to attend the CHCI Conference and Gala this year as a WID Ambassador. For a while, I had wanted to collaborate with CHCI on their engagement with the disabled Latinx community. CHCI truly is the leader in preparing the next generation of Latinx leaders in the political and policy realms. It is important that CHCI understand and be responsive to the needs of disabled Latinxs and promote their participation in their programs.



Katherine as a Disability Ambassador

This conference presented me a great opportunity for me to re-engage with CHCI and get to know the new staff. I made sure to attend the health and healthcare panels and challenge the panelists during the Q&A to consider how a disability rights framework might fit into their work. I laid a good foundation for follow-up and was really encouraged by their welcoming responses.

The CHCI Conference was accessible in so many ways. For me, it was important that there was ample space to retreat to for brief pauses away from the noise and crowds. The Conference Accessibility Initiative by JP Morgan Chase and WID not only makes an immediate impact by helping with conference accessibility, but it encourages folks like myself to attend and build those lasting connections for further work!

Katherine Perez is a co-founder of The National Coalition for Latinxs with Disabilities (CNLD). CNLD works toward a society in which the human rights of Latinxs with disabilities are upheld and all their intersecting identities are embraced. As a Latina with mental disability, Katherine strives to shut down the stigma and shame in the Latinx community surrounding mental illness.



Katherine with another CNLD co-founder Jessica Jimenez