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March 22, 2011

RE: Statement Read on the Floor of the Arizona State Senate on Thursday, March 17, 2011

The Honorable Lori Klein
 Senator, Arizona State Senate
 1700 W. Washington, Room 302
 Phoenix, AZ 85007

Dear Senator Klein:

On behalf of the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU), I am writing to express our extreme disappointment in your decision to read a letter which denigrated the dreams and aspirations of Hispanic students during the debate on SB 1407 on the Senate Floor on Thursday, March 17, 2011.

The letter you read from a yet unnamed substitute teacher claimed, “I have found that substitute teaching in these areas most of the Hispanic students do not want to be educated but rather be gang members and gangsters.” Let us set the record straight: not only is that statement patently offensive, it is patently false. According to the Pew Hispanic Center, “Nearly all Latino youths (89%) and older adults (88%) agree with the statement that a college degree is important for getting ahead in life. But just under half of Latinos ages 18 to 25 say they plan to get a college degree. The reason most often given by Latino youths who cut off their education before college is financial pressure to support a family.” Furthermore, “Even more so than other youths, young Latinos have high aspirations for career success. Some 89% say it is very important in their lives, compared with 80% of the full population of 18- to 25-year-olds who say the same.” As research shows, Hispanic children value their education. Instead of reading negative statements about the aspirations of these students, your responsibility as a public servant should be focused on ensuring that ALL children achieve their potential through access to higher education and financial aid.

We call on you to immediately apologize for reading this letter on the Floor of the Arizona Senate. We can agree to disagree on issues; we cannot, however, condone the denigration of any student and/or racial group. This leads to a further fractioning of this great nation, and brings us no closer to resolving the many and serious issues facing us today.

Sincerely,

Antonio Flores
 President and CEO
 HACU is a registered lobbyist in Arizona. ID #105749

cc: The Honorable Russell Pearce; President Pro Tem, Arizona State Senate
 Members, Arizona State Senate
 Erica Romero, Executive Director of Western States Legislative Affairs, HACU