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HLAI president discusses plan to bolster group's Latina membership

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Juan Morado Jr. has only been president of the Hispanic Lawyers Association of Illinois for a few months, but he's already hard at work.

Under Morado's direction, the HLAI is bolstering one of its initiatives with programming and mentoring opportunities that are oriented for the bar group's Latina members.

Latinas made up only 0.6 percent of partners and 2 percent of associates in private practice law firms, according to a 2015 study from the National Association for Law Placement, which was cited in a 2017 report from the Institute for Inclusion in the Legal Profession. In that IILP report, Jill Lynch Cruz, a career development consultant who has researched Latinas in the legal profession, wrote that, "Latinas are among the most underrepresented groups within each of the principal legal sectors, particularly at the most senior levels."

But the HLAI's efforts to improve the diversity of the bar wasn't the only thing Morado discussed with the Daily Law Bulletin in a written questionnaire.

The 36-year-old lawyer talked about the transition he made when he left his job as general counsel for the state's Health Facilities and Services Review Board to his current role, of counsel at Benesch.

CDLB: *One of your goals this year is to increase the number of Latina lawyers practicing in all areas of law. How do you plan to do that?*

Morado: The first step for our organization was to assess what we already in place and strategize on what we could be doing better. That lead to the evolution of our existing committee into the Latina Lawyers Commission. Taking a play directly from our national affiliate (Hispanic National Bar Association), we launched the LLC this past year. The HLAI LLC will be focused on creating programming specifically geared towards our Latina members, building stronger mentoring relationships in conjunction with our existing JD Mentors program and giving our Latina members a larger platform and voice within our organization.

CDLB: *Is there an area of law that you believe has too few Latinx lawyers practicing? Conversely, is there an area of law that is oversaturated with Latinx lawyers?*

Morado: As a health-care attorney, I can tell you there are not many Latinxs practicing in my particular area of law. There are certainly no areas where Latinxs are oversaturated. With that said, we do have a healthy number of Latinxs attorneys in the areas of employment and immigration law.

CDLB: *You started out and worked in government for years. What led you to switching to private practice?*

Morado: I knew in law school that I wanted to be a public servant. I was able to achieve that goal through my service as an assistant corporation counsel for the city of Chicago and by serving in the highest level of government for the state of Illinois. Having met those professional goals, private practice was new challenge but one that had also opened several new opportunities for me.

CDLB: *I imagine there's probably a lot of differences between representing the state and representing private actors in the health-care field, like hospitals and physician groups. What would you say was the most surprising or interesting change you had to deal with as a result of your career change?*

Morado: The most interesting part of private practice is that I am finding that I have the ability to continue helping everyday people by helping my client navigate the often-cumbersome government regulations that health-care providers face.

CDLB: *What are your long-term goals for your legal career?*

Morado: My long-term career goal is to continue developing my practice, provide the highest quality service to my client and maintain my commitments to mentor and empower those from my community.

CDLB: *What is the first app you use on your smartphone when you wake up in the morning?*

Morado: Mail.

CDLB: *What TV show did you just finish binge-watching?*

Morado: "Narcos: Mexico."

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