

# MARIE MAXEY FOUNDATION

## Helping Unaccompanied Children Thrive in Fairfax County, Virginia<sup>1</sup>

Between 2018 and 2021, the Office of Refugee Resettlement released 86,325 Unaccompanied Children (UC) to sponsors in twenty-seven counties in the United States. More than 13,000 of these children have been placed in the Washington DC metropolitan area which is comprised of Northern Virginia, Maryland and DC. Out of this total, 3,374 youth were placed in Fairfax County and are required under Virginia law to be in our public school system.<sup>2</sup> Support is needed to help Hispanic youth overcome social and economic circumstances that limit their opportunity for a higher education. We believe that our common response to this situation can determine the future, for better or worse, of Fairfax County, Virginia and other migrant-destination communities.

In order to understand and address this challenge, we are working in Fairfax County to determine how to help Hispanic youth succeed. Our approach includes (1) analyzing U.S. census data to map high-density populations of Northern Triangle origin residents, (2) determining which public schools within those communities have the highest Hispanic student enrollment (i.e., 40 percent or higher), and (3) providing information to students, parents and stakeholders of the public and private support services that are available to help address basic needs, prepare for college, and successfully complete a higher education.<sup>3</sup> We use this information to focus our work, realistically define our goals, and leverage the overall impact of our activities.

### Background:

Irregular migration is complex and difficult to understand which in turn makes solutions hard to define and implement. While debate continues about how to reform our immigration system, we believe we must focus on the situation at hand – that is, the young people in our communities and public schools who need help now. The highest concentrations of Unaccompanied Children (UC) are in California, Texas, Florida, Washington DC Metro Area, and New York/New Jersey. Eighty congressional districts are impacted by this form of irregular migration. The additional cost to public schools is conservatively estimated at over \$1 billion annually. A comprehensive analysis of this migration can be found at <https://www.maxey.info/helping-unaccompanied-children>.

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<sup>1</sup> The Office of Refugee Resettlement defines an unaccompanied child as a minor (less than 18 years of age) that is in the custody of Customs and Border Protection (CBP) without a parent or legal guardian. Current U.S. law requires CBP to transfer custody of an unaccompanied child to the Office of Refugee Resettlement which then seeks to place the child with a parent or relative in the United States until the refugee appeal process can be completed. See <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/programs/uc> These children are in complex family situations and, in many cases, appear to have undergone psychological trauma prior to entering local public schools. See <https://www.apa.org/pi/families/resources/newsletter/2016/06/immigrant-minors>

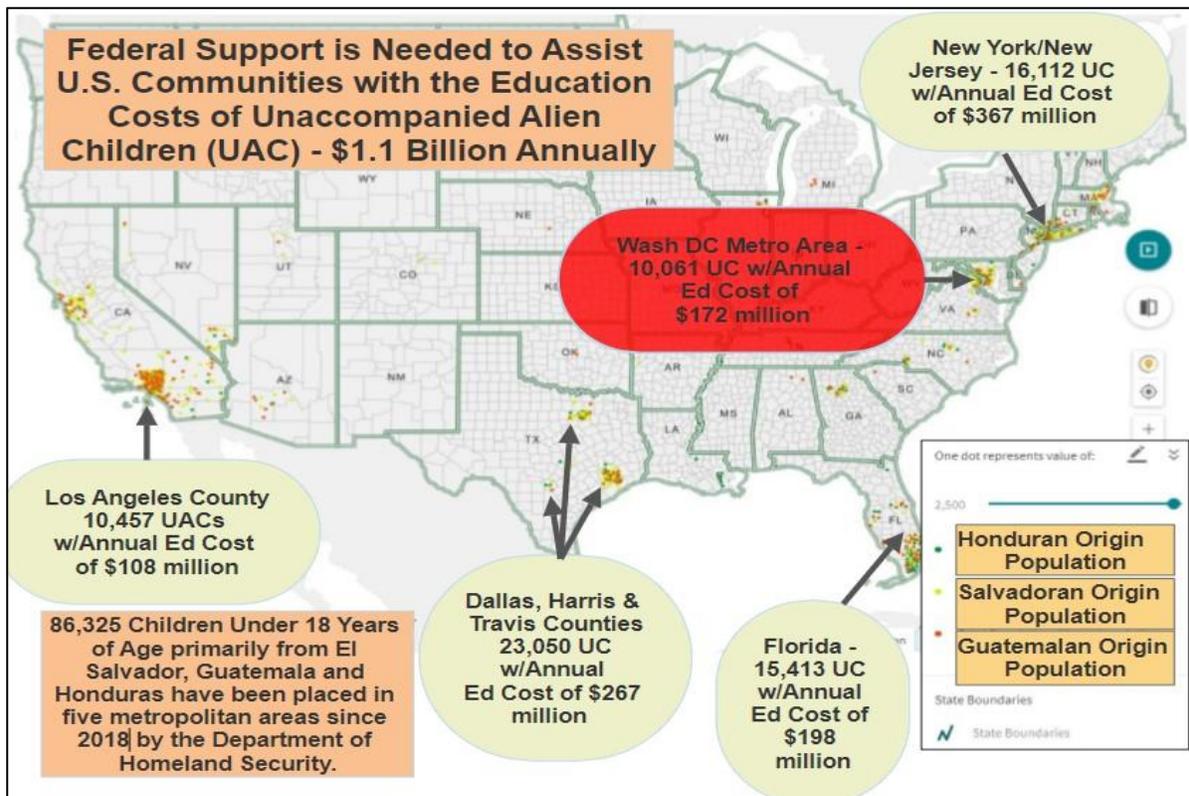
<sup>2</sup> United States. Office of Refugee Resettlement. Unaccompanied Children Released to Sponsors by State. See <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/grant-funding/unaccompanied-children-released-sponsors-state> Accessed 12/28/2021.

<sup>3</sup> The Marie Maxey Foundation provides scholarships to Hispanic youth attending two and four-year colleges or technical schools, connect young people and their families to local support services, and provide analysis and research to local, state and federal policy makers. Our goal is to make people aware of the situation, explain how they can support a child's dream for higher education through our scholarship program, and give hope to Hispanic youth that they can have a better future.

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Given the additional cost that public schools have to absorb, help is needed to provide social and economic services to Hispanic youth and their families. The goal is for them to be integrated into their communities as educated, productive residents while decreasing the potential for youth gang activity and criminal behavior. Working together we can ensure that everyone has an opportunity for a better life and the ability to move toward a better future. Relatively small investments now can create the conditions needed for prosperous, dynamic communities in the future.

Since 2018, 86,325 Unaccompanied Children (UC) have been placed with sponsors in the United States. More than 13,000 UC have been placed in the Washington DC metro area with 3,374 going to Fairfax County.



Hispanic Education in the United States: The 2019 Condition of Education report published by National Center for Education Statistics indicates that while Hispanic student dropout rates have improved over the last ten years, now standing at 7.7 percent, it is still 88 percent higher than the dropout rate for white students and 38 percent higher than the rate for black students. Disaggregated data shows that foreign-born Hispanic students have a dropout rate of 16.7% which is over 300 percent higher than for whites and approximately 200 percent higher than the black dropout rate.<sup>4</sup>

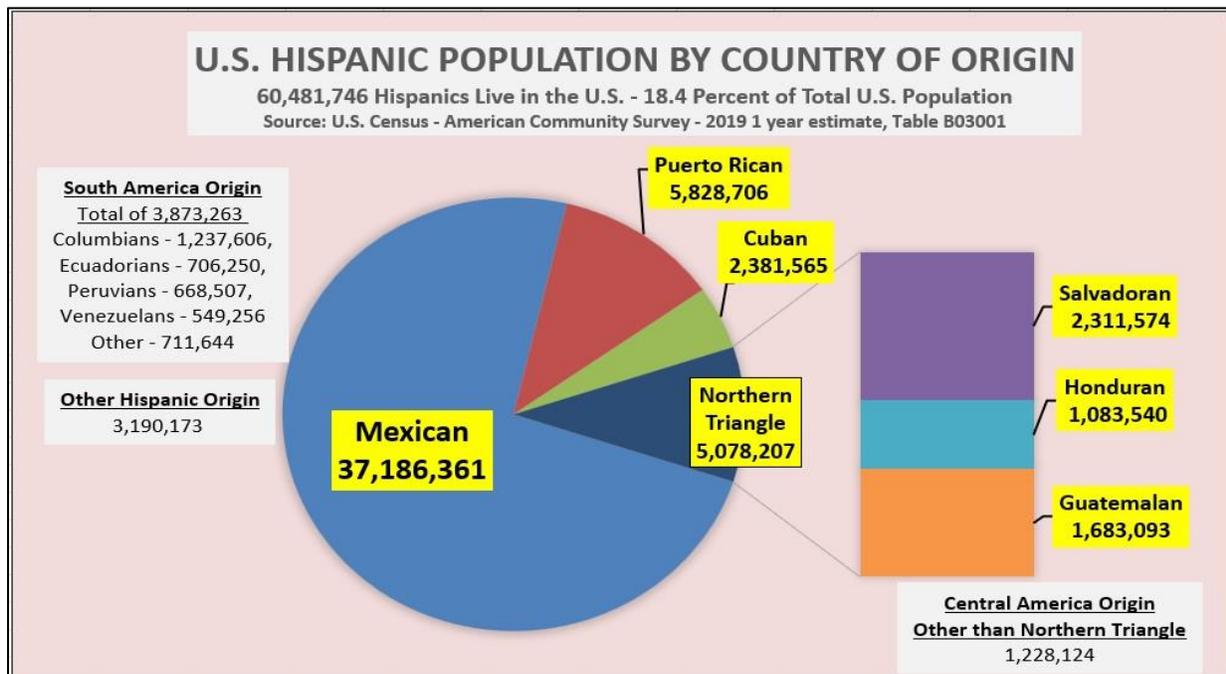
<sup>4</sup> Condition of Education Report. National Center for Education Statistics. 2019. See <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/coj>

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School attendance and improved education outcomes results in better employment, the opportunity for higher wages, and an aversion to risky behavior with individuals realizing that they have more to lose from violent behavior. One major study indicates that each additional year of education can result in an 11 percent reduction in all crime and up to a 30 percent reduction in murder and assault rates.<sup>5</sup> Clearly, education is critical to the future of our communities.

### Hispanic Population in the United States

According to the Census Bureau, there are over 60 million Hispanic origin residents in the United States. The top four groups are Mexico (37.2 million), Puerto Rico (5.8 million), Northern Triangle (5.1 million), Cuba (2.4 million) and South America (3.9 million). There are 3.2 million residents that do not identify with a country of origin other than the United States. From the Northern Triangle, there are 2.3 million Salvadorans, 1.1 million Hondurans and 1.7 million Guatemalans. The focus of this paper is on the Northern Triangle origin population.



### Northern Triangle Origin Residents in the United States

Migration, according to the Pew Hispanic Center, is a chain event in which migrants tend to go to areas where they have social networks (family, friends or colleagues) that provide information and support for housing and employment. With Northern Triangle origin children making up approximately 90 percent of the Unaccompanied Children placed with sponsors, it is important

<sup>5</sup> Randi Hjalmarsson, Lance Lochner. [“The Impact of Education on Crime: International Evidence.”](#) Research Report – CESifo DICE February 2012. Accessed Dec. 6, 2016:  
[http://www.economics.handels.gu.se/digitalAssets/1439/1439011\\_49-55\\_research\\_lochner.pdf](http://www.economics.handels.gu.se/digitalAssets/1439/1439011_49-55_research_lochner.pdf)

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to understand where they live in the United States, what issues they face in obtaining an education, and how can we can help. Our analysis of specific neighborhoods identified the specific communities where Northern Triangle origin residents reside and which public schools their children most likely attend. By mapping assets that are available to assist these residents (e.g., local and national non-profits, hometown associations, churches, civic groups, etc.), we seek to help them access networks in these communities to help them overcome obstacles to better education outcomes. Based on lessons learned from our experience in Fairfax County, Virginia, we plan on developing similar action plans in the other Northern Triangle origin communities across the United States. The goal is to help ensure these that Hispanic youth have the financial and academic support necessary to complete their higher education.

### Top U.S. Counties for Placement of Unaccompanied Children (2018 – 2021)

Source: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/grant-funding/unaccompanied-children-released-sponsors-county>

State	County	2018	2019	2020	2021	State	County	2018	2019	2020	2021
New York	Bronx	186	442	139	552	Maryland	Montgomery	355	1168	214	1230
New York	Queens	662	1101	459	1541	Maryland	Prince George's	571	1557	263	1678
New York	Kings	465	847	271	1160				173%	-83%	538%
New York	Suffolk	451	1478	284	1767						
New York	Nassau	386	1117	172	1234	Washington DC	WashDC	0	0	0	307
New York	Westchester	212	415	100	671						
		2,362	5,400	1,425	6,925	California	Los Angeles	1825	3513	873	4246
			129%	-74%	386%				92%	-75%	386%
State	County	2018	2019	2020	2021	State	County	2018	2019	2020	2021
New Jersey	Essex	180	549	180	900	Texas	Dallas	601	1556	317	2671
New Jersey	Bergen	230	390	78	421	Texas	Travis	263	769	231	1433
New Jersey	Hudson	211	460	107	555	Texas	Harris	2088	4993	1095	7033
New Jersey	Union	918	154	790	420				148%	-78%	578%
New Jersey	Mercer	877	87	562	196						
		2,416	1,640	1,717	2,492	Florida	Orange	256	484	104	918
			-32%	5%	45%	Florida	Palm Beach	910	1528	267	1942
State	County	2018	2019	2020	2021	Florida <th>County</th> <th>2018</th> <th>2019</th> <th>2020</th> <th>2021</th>	County	2018	2019	2020	2021
Virginia	Loudoun	82	248	0	285	Florida	Broward	308	618	127	781
Virginia	Fairfax	470	1318	226	1360	Florida	Dade	2197	293	1702	834
Virginia	Arlington	53	175	0	154	Florida	Lee	894	122	636	492
Virginia	Prince William	151	484	76	603				-33%	-7%	75%
		756	2,225	302	2,402						
			194%	-86%	695%						

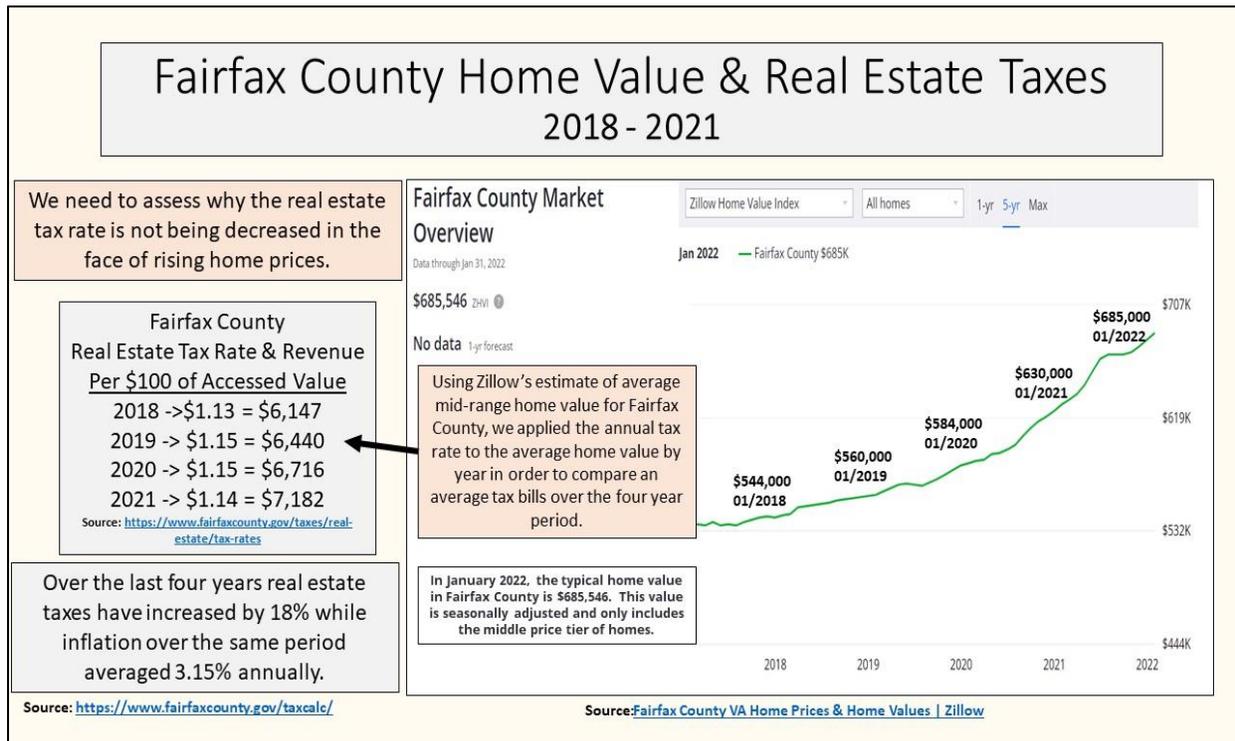
As indicated in the table above, from 2018 through 2021, 86,325 youth, primarily from the Northern Triangle, were placed in 27 counties. The percentage change in number of UC placed in these counties varied and is highlighted. The percentage change increase between 2020 and 2021 in Virginia, Texas, Maryland, California and New York map indicate a relatively younger immigrant population that is now focused on bringing their children from the Northern Triangle.

### Helping Youth of Northern Triangle Origin in Fairfax County, Virginia

In terms of addressing irregular migration from Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador to the United States, we analyzed data from Social Explorer (<https://www.socialexplorer.com/>) at the county level for residents who indicated in their US Census response that they were originally from the Northern Triangle. An initial examination of the data on Unaccompanied Children

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placement, shows that Northern Virginia and especially Fairfax County is an area with a significant increase in placements. Using U.S. Census data, we mapped the neighborhoods with large concentrations of Northern Triangle origin residents in Fairfax County. Support needed by these students includes counseling for trauma, English language training and additional tutoring to achieve grade level math and reading comprehension. Some estimates for education costs of these children indicate an additional cost of \$2,000 over and above the normal per student cost of a school district. For Fairfax County that would mean a per student cost of approximately \$18,000.<sup>6</sup> The estimated increased cost to the Fairfax County public school system over this period is more than \$150 million.<sup>7</sup> This additional cost is primarily borne by local taxpayers with the majority of the resources coming from real estate taxes.



As these taxes are increased to cover education and other local costs, the retired, fixed-income homeowner bears a disproportionate burden. This is important politically since the elderly, with over an 80 percent average turnout, can have a significant impact on elections. Aside from tax increases, youth adaptation problems can have economic consequences as communities experience increased youth gang activity there is a significant and negative impact on property values, less private investment in the community, and decreased employment opportunities.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> See Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) website -- <https://www.fcps.edu/about-fcps>

<sup>7</sup> This estimate is based on a per student cost of \$18,000 multiplied by the number of Unaccompanied Children estimated to be enrolled in FCPS.

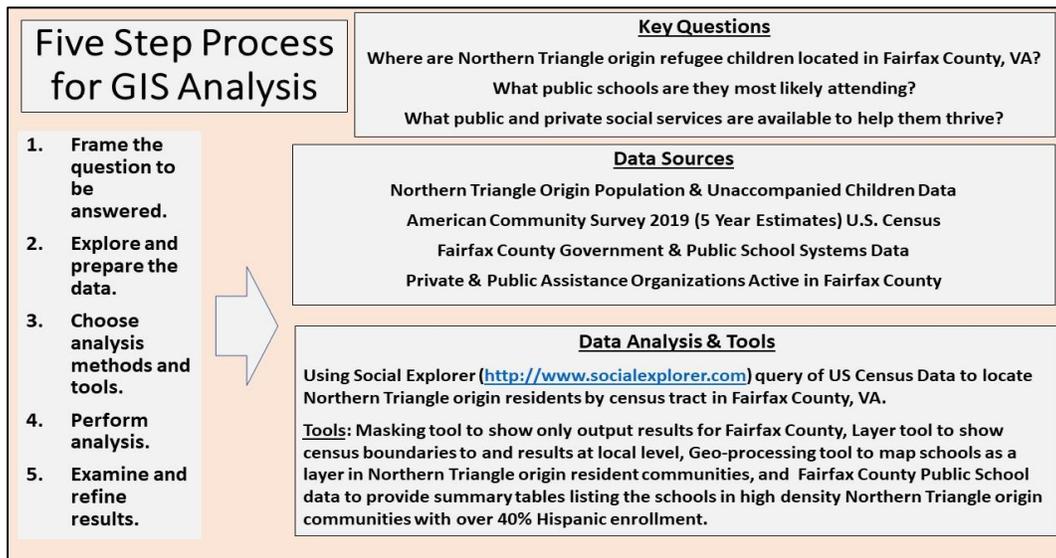
<sup>8</sup> See <https://youth.gov/youth-topics/preventing-gang-involvement/adverse-effects> -- "Large communities, those with a population over 50,000, are at the greatest risk of significant gang activity, and community members face heightened fear that they, their families, schools, or businesses, will become victims of theft and/or violence. Further, communities with gang activity are disproportionately affected by theft, negative economic impact, vandalism, assault, gun violence, illegal drug trade, and homicide."

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## Methodology

Using Social Explorer (<http://www.socialexplorer.com>), a Geographic Information System (GIS) analysis was conducted to determine the most likely location of Northern Triangle origin children in Fairfax County, Virginia. We determined which communities had the highest proportion of these residents and then mapped the public schools that Hispanic youth in those communities are attending. The following illustration provides an overview of the methodology used for this analysis. Office of Refugee Resettlement data indicates that approximately 90 percent of Unaccompanied Children are from the Northern Triangle with the most coming from Guatemala followed by Honduras.

We started with Unaccompanied Children placement statistics from the Office of Refugee Resettlement, Department of Homeland Security. The most comprehensive information in this area is at the Department of Health and Human Services.<sup>9</sup> Using this information, we identified the top twenty-seven counties that had a significant number of Unaccompanied Children placed there. In order to identify where these children are most likely located, we identified relatively high-density communities of Northern Triangle origin residents.



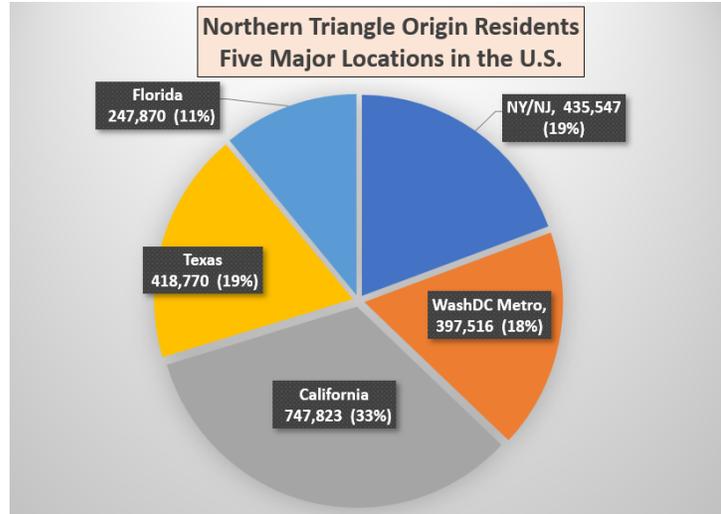
Social Explorer, a GIS program, was used to map Northern Triangle origin residents in the United States with a focus on the twenty-seven counties that received the majority of Unaccompanied Children over the last four years. Knowing where these children live and attend school would allow us to target our foundation efforts and scholarship program in the schools in their communities.



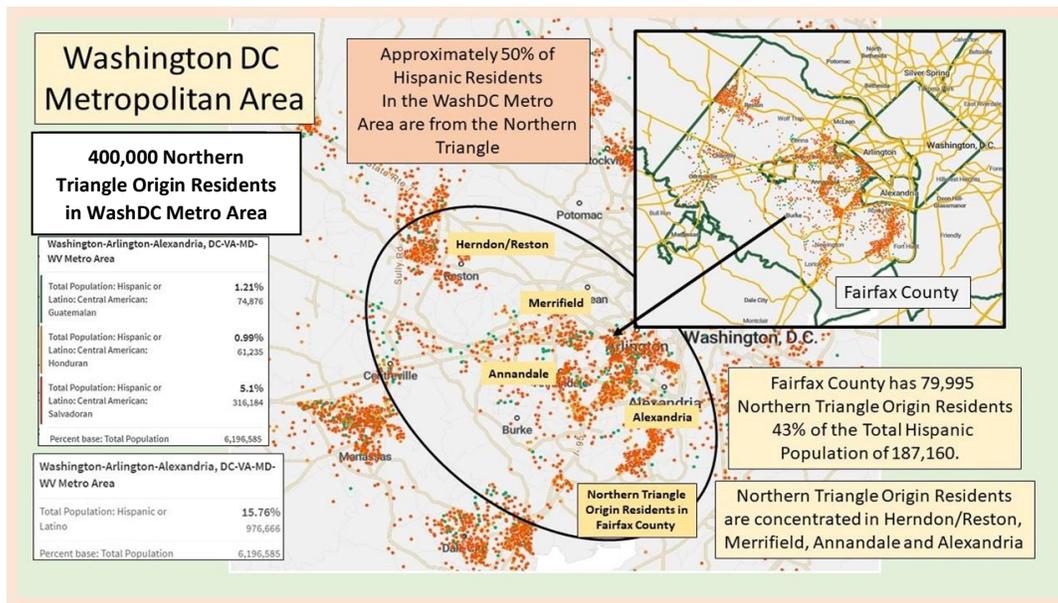
<sup>9</sup> See Health and Human Services -- <https://www.hhs.gov/programs/social-services/unaccompanied-children/index.html>.

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Using the American Community Survey (ACS) 2019 Five Year data, country of origin was selected for Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador and a search was made on Social Explorer for a map of U.S. residents born in one of these countries. The majority of these residents live in five areas of the United States: California (LA County); Texas; Florida; NY/NJ; and Washington DC Metro area. See Attachment Three for Northern Triangle origin population by area.



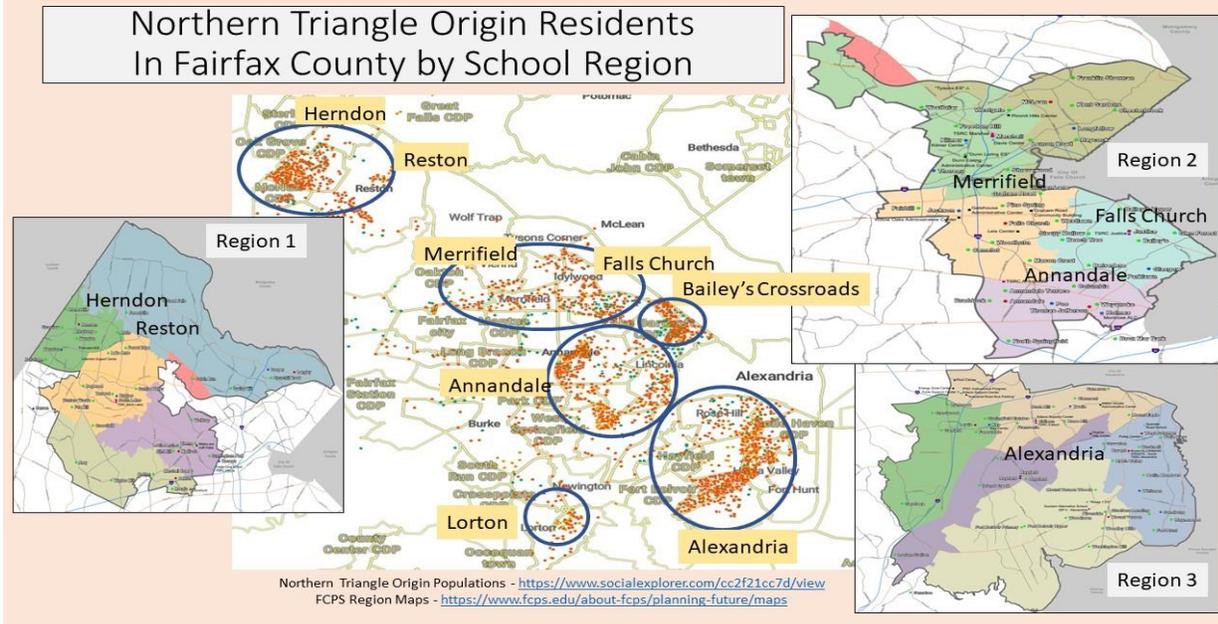
For the Washington DC Metro area, we found approximately 400,000 residents whose origin was from a Northern Triangle country. In Fairfax County, almost 80,000 residents originally came from the same area and made up over 40 percent of the Hispanic population. In order to determine where UC were attending school, we mapped the highest concentration areas for Northern Triangle origin residents.



Based on our analysis, we identified eight communities in Fairfax County with a relatively high percentage of Northern Triangle origin residents: (1) Herndon; (2) Reston; (3) Merrifield; (4) Falls Church; (5) Bailey’s Crossroads; (6) Annandale; (7) Alexandria and (8) Lorton. These communities are located in three of the five Fairfax County Public Schools education regions in the county: Region One – Herndon-Reston; Region Two – Merrifield, Falls Church and Annandale; and Region Three – Alexandria. With an overlay of the communities and the school system, we then identified which public schools would most likely have enrolled the most Unaccompanied Children.

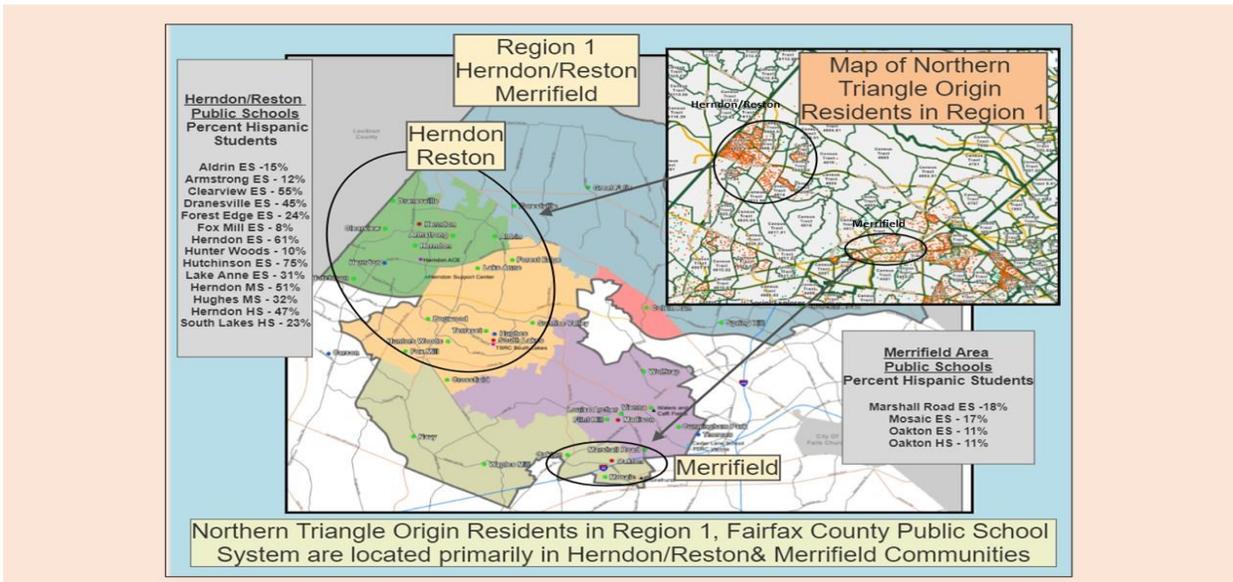
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We determined that three Fairfax County Public School regions were home to the highest proportion of Northern Triangle origin residents. We identified schools in these communities and found those schools with at least a 40 percent or higher Hispanic enrollment. These schools then became our focus for outreach and action.



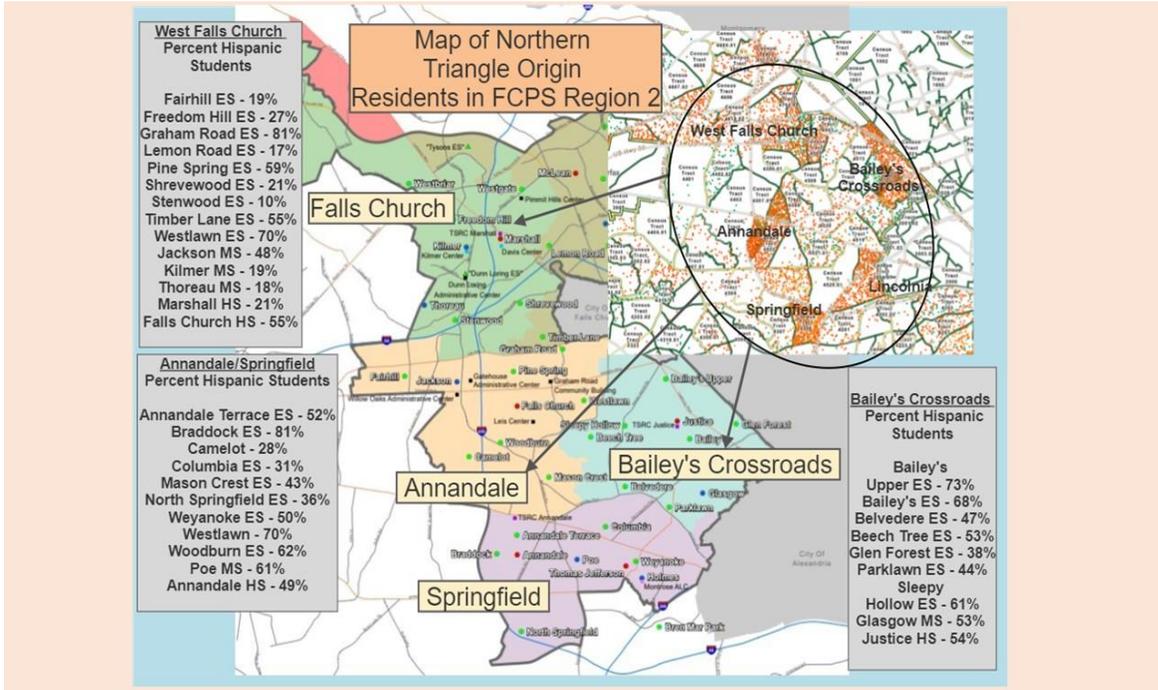
## Region One

An analysis of the communities and public schools in Region One provides a breakdown of Hispanic youth enrollment. Eighteen schools were identified and six of those had Hispanic enrollment in excess of forty percent or higher. The priority schools identified were: Clearview ES; Dranesville ES, Hutchinson ED; Herndon ES; Herndon MS; and Herndon HS.

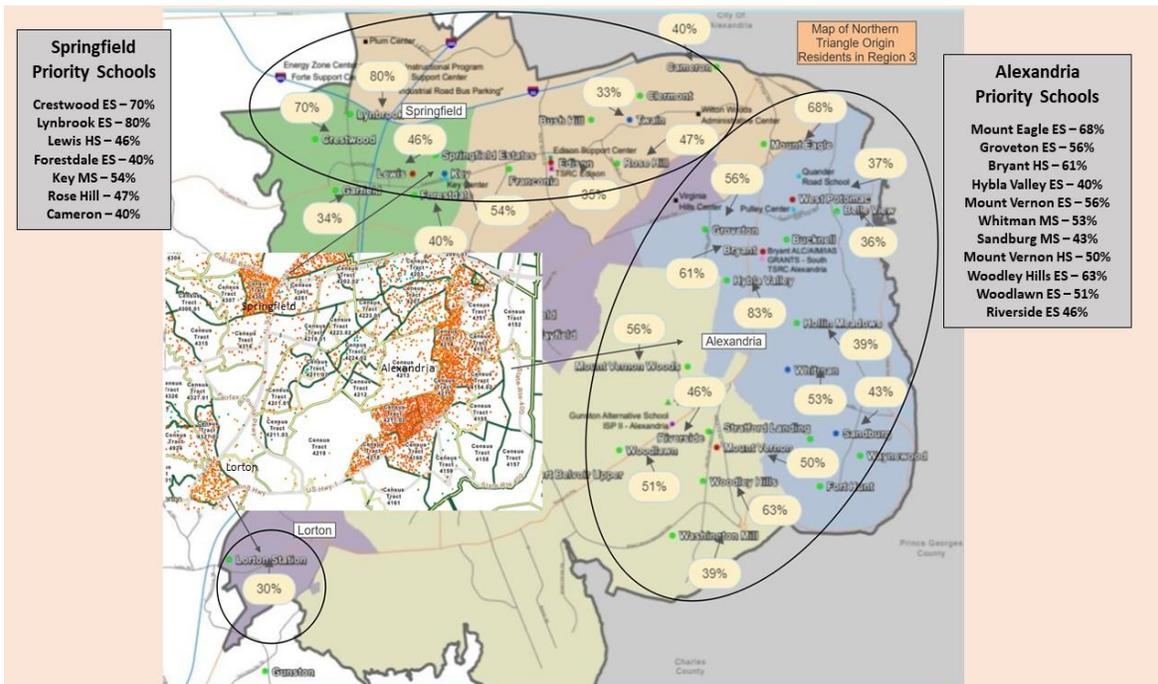


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Region Two - This region has twenty-one schools with a Hispanic student enrollment in excess of forty percent or higher located in West Falls Church, Annandale and Bailey's Crossroads.

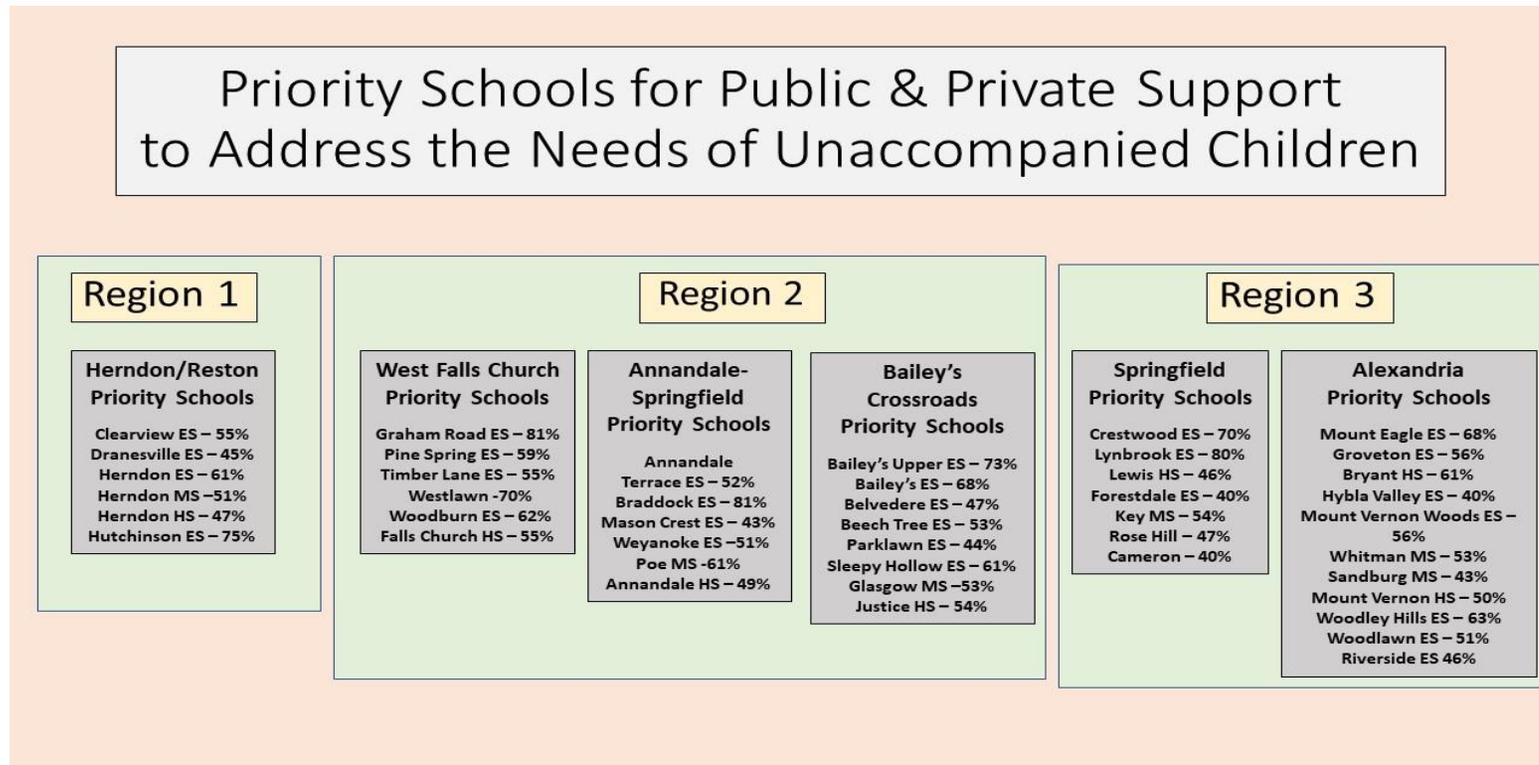


Region Three - There are eighteen schools with Hispanic enrollment of forty percent or higher in this region. This region has the highest concentration of Hispanic youth in Fairfax County.



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## Priority Schools



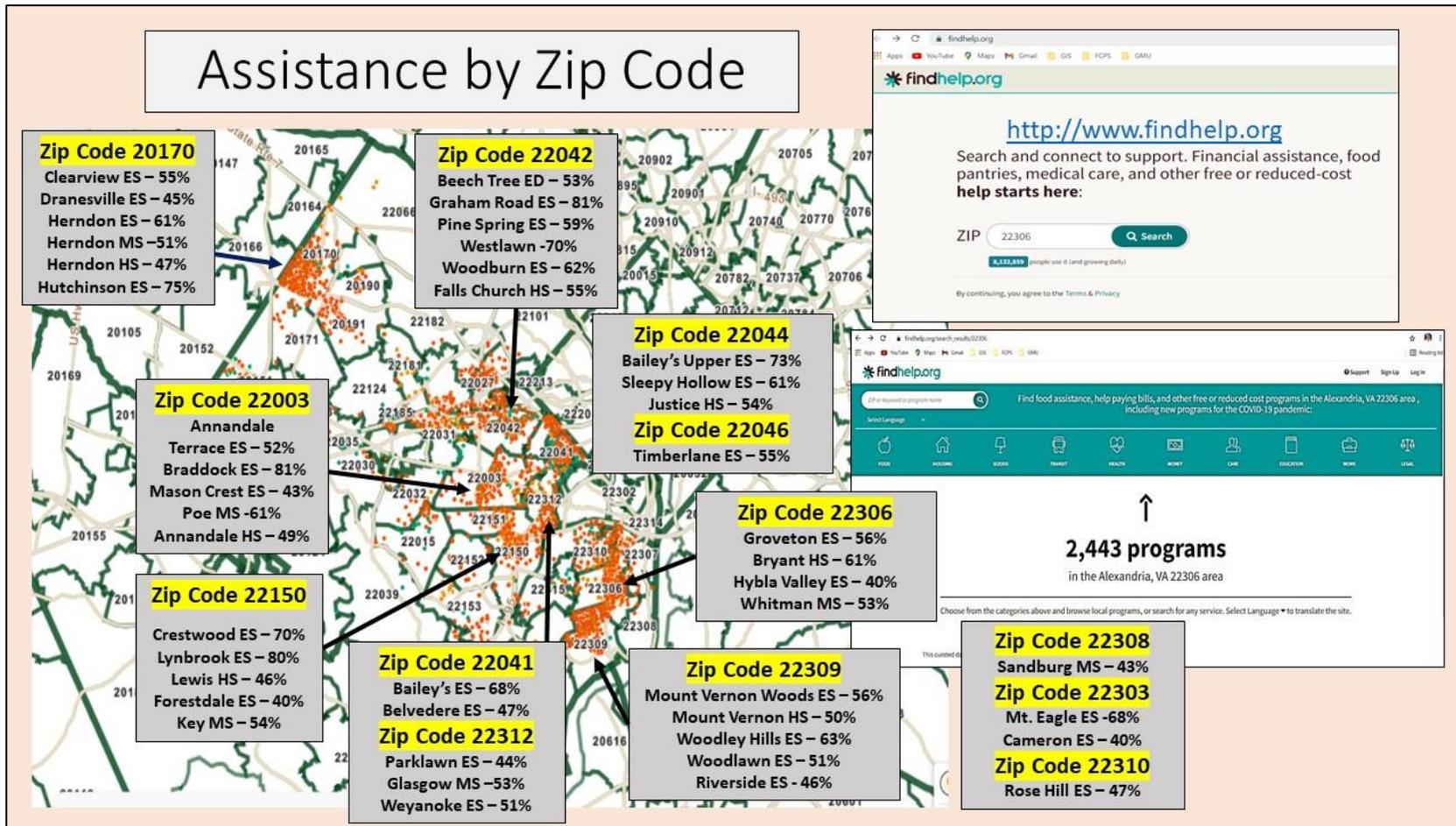
We identified a total of forty-four public schools in Northern Triangle origin communities in Fairfax County with forty percent or higher Hispanic student enrollment. This analysis showed us where to focus our scholarship program, initiate mentoring activities as well as outreach to community organizations to find ways help these students. The stakeholders we are contacting include non-profits, foundations, churches, public programs, Northern Triangle country embassies and private companies. The goal is to highlight the needs faced by these children and mobilize resources to help them succeed.

**Seven High Schools were identified from our analysis as the priority targets for support: Herndon HS; Falls Church HS; Annandale HS; Justice HS; Lewis HS; Bryant HS; and Mount Vernon HS.**

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## Resources Map

One tool we are using is a website that maps entities and programs that provide economic assistance, housing support, counseling and other services. We are sharing this information with each school in the Northern Triangle origin communities and we are targeting seven high schools in these communities which have a Hispanic student enrollment of forty percent or more.<sup>10</sup>

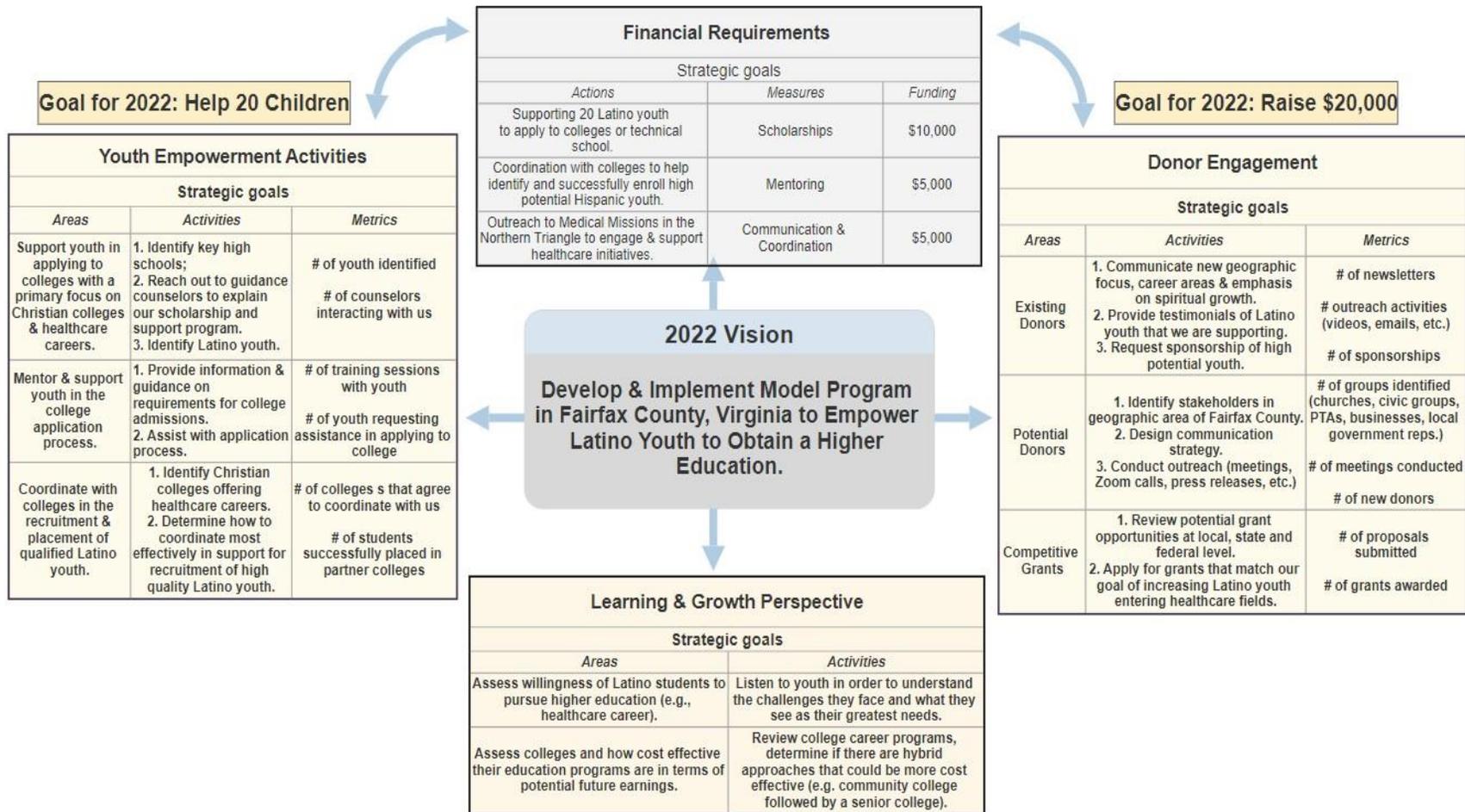


<sup>10</sup> The focus on high schools in these communities is based on information from the Department of Homeland Security that approximately seventy percent of the UCs coming in recent years are from 15 to 17 years of age. See Attachment Two.

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## Strategy

Public schools need assistance to ensure that Hispanic students have a chance to succeed in Fairfax County, Virginia. The Marie Maxey Foundation will identify and assist twenty children move forward with a higher education (either in college or technical school). We will provide scholarships, mentoring, and special initiatives. Our fundraising goal will be \$20,000 for 2022 and we seek to actively partner with public schools, universities and technical schools. The long-term goal is to have twenty Hispanic youth successfully graduating from college or technical school and transitioning into a good job.

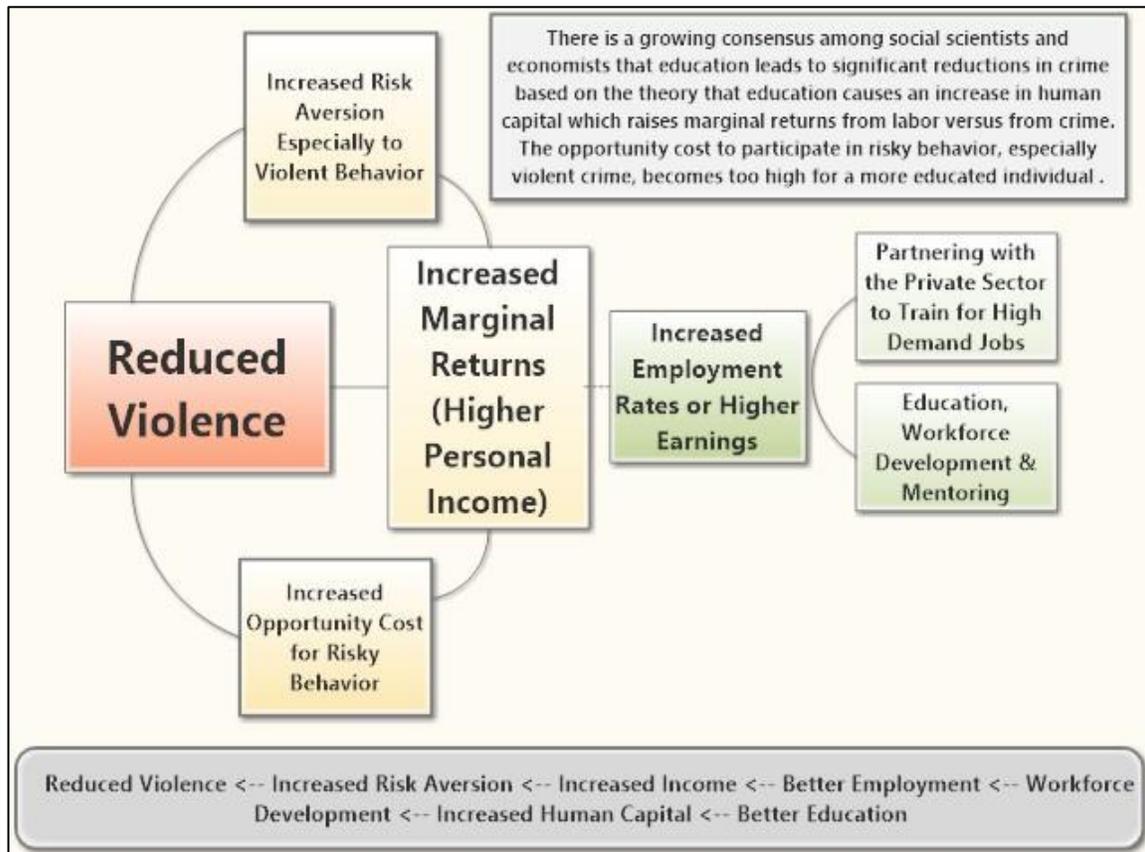


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## Attachment One

### Impact of Education on Violence

- Research literature indicates a growing consensus among social scientists and economists that education increases human capital formation and when combined with private sector development activities (workforce development, enterprise promotion, etc.) increases employment and provides an individual the opportunity for higher wages.
- Higher wages increase marginal returns from work and create higher opportunity cost for risky behavior. Risk aversion increases as individuals have more to lose from violent behavior. This in turn leads to changes in attitudes and decreased crime levels. One major study indicates that each additional year of education results in an 11 percent reduction in all crime and up to a 30 percent reduction in violent crime.
- The dream of a better life through education changes behavior, promotes positive social outcomes and provides the impetus for violence reduction as measured by decreased crime levels (especially violent crimes which are seen to decrease three times more than overall crime rate reductions).



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Chris Blattman on violence in Africa: <http://www.poverty-action.org/study/impact-cognitive-behavior-therapy-and-cash-transfers-high-risk-young-men-liberia>

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## Attachment Two

### Breakdown by Gender

YEAR	MALES	FEMALES
FY2021	66%	34%
FY2020	68%	32%
FY2019	66%	34%
FY2018	71%	29%
FY2017	68%	32%
FY2016	67%	33%
FY2015	68%	32%
FY2014	66%	34%
FY2013	73%	27%
FY2012	77%	23%

### Breakdown by Country of Origin

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN	FY2021	FY2020	FY2019	FY2018	FY2017	FY2016	FY2015	FY2014	FY2013	FY2012
HONDURAS	32%	25%	30%	26%	23%	21%	17%	34%	30%	27%
GUATEMALA	47%	48%	45%	54%	45%	40%	45%	32%	37%	34%
EL SALVADOR	13%	14%	18%	12%	27%	34%	29%	29%	26%	27%
MEXICO	1%	6%	2%	3%	<3%	3%	6%	<2%	3%	8%
ALL OTHER COUNTRIES	7%	8%	5%	<5%	3%	2%	3%	<3%	5%	4%

### Breakdown by Age

AGE	FY2021	FY2020	FY2019	FY2018	FY2017	FY2016	FY2015	FY2014	FY2013	FY2012
0-12	16%	16%	16%	15%	17%	18%	17%	21%	14%	11%
13-14	13%	12%	12%	12%	13%	14%	14%	16%	13%	11%
15-16	39%	37%	37%	37%	37%	37%	38%	36%	40%	39%
17	33%	35%	35%	35%	32%	31%	30%	27%	34%	38%

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## Attachment Three

### Northern Triangle Residents in the United States

State	County	Guatemala	Honduran	Salvadoran	
New York	Bronx	6,764	21,387	6,281	
New York	Queens	17,891	11,515	25,707	
New York	Kings	12,617	10,044	9,391	
New York	Suffolk	11,066	14,204	59,594	
New York	Nassau	9,185	12,733	54,335	
New York	Westchester	16,779	3,676	7,031	
		<u>74,302</u>	<u>73,559</u>	<u>162,339</u>	310,200
		<b>Guatemala</b>	<b>Honduran</b>	<b>Salvadoran</b>	
New Jersey	Essex	4,873	4,660	6,616	
New Jersey	Bergen	7,095	3,594	7,210	
New Jersey	Hudson	9,752	11,857	17,468	
New Jersey	Union	8,455	5,074	17,321	
New Jersey	Mercer	18,614	1,877	881	
		<u>48,789</u>	<u>27,062</u>	<u>49,496</u>	125,347
		<b>Guatemala</b>	<b>Honduran</b>	<b>Salvadoran</b>	
Virginia	Loudoun	2,238	4,176	13,353	
Virginia	Fairfax	11,687	13,701	54,607	
Virginia	Arlington	2,932	818	7,884	
Virginia	Prince William	7,932	7,598	37,685	
		<u>24,789</u>	<u>26,293</u>	<u>113,529</u>	164,611
		<b>Guatemala</b>	<b>Honduran</b>	<b>Salvadoran</b>	
Maryland	Montgomery	21,715	9,481	74,833	
Maryland	Prince George's	14,716	12,865	73,012	
		<u>36,431</u>	<u>22,346</u>	<u>147,845</u>	206,622
		<b>Guatemala</b>	<b>Honduran</b>	<b>Salvadoran</b>	
Washington DC	Washington DC	3,003	3,435	19,845	26,283
		<b>Guatemala</b>	<b>Honduran</b>	<b>Salvadoran</b>	
California	Los Angeles	270,916	51,225	425,682	747,823
		<b>Guatemala</b>	<b>Honduran</b>	<b>Salvadoran</b>	
Texas	Dallas	14,552	21,472	65,949	
Texas	Travis	5,211	9,395	6,409	
Texas	Harris	49,371	80,915	165,496	
		<u>69,134</u>	<u>111,782</u>	<u>237,854</u>	418,770
		<b>Guatemala</b>	<b>Honduran</b>	<b>Salvadoran</b>	
Florida	Orange	9,001	7,639	3,617	
Florida	Palm Beach	28,051	12,271	10,080	
Florida	Broward	11,615	21,622	13,639	
Florida	Dade	26,381	67,760	21,274	
Florida	Lee	8,443	4,620	1,857	
		<u>83,491</u>	<u>113,912</u>	<u>50,467</u>	247,870

Source: American Community Survey 2019 Five Year Estimate, U.S. Census

