

## Holyoke Community College to host national summit on Puerto Rican diaspora

Carlos Santiago, Massachusetts commissioner of higher education, will be the keynote speaker at a national summit at Holyoke Community College this Saturday, Oct. 12, exploring the impact of Hurricane Maria evacuees on the Puerto Rican population of New England.

The "Puerto Rico, Puerto Ricans New England Diaspora Summit" is organized by Enlace de Familias in Holyoke and Centro, the Center for Puerto Rican Studies, at Hunter College in New York City.

The summit will run from 8:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. in the PeoplesBank Conference Room on the third floor of the Kittredge Center for Business and Workforce Development on HCC's main campus at 303 Homestead Ave., Holyoke.

The summit will include talks, panel discussions and breakout sessions

on a wide variety of subjects, featuring academics, researchers, economists and other experts in their fields from as far away as Florida and Puerto Rico.

Santiago's talk will begin at 1:45 p.m.

HCC 2017 alumna Karianne A. Santiago-Ruiz of Amherst, now a student at UMass-Amherst and the New England regional liaison for the National Puerto Rican Student Coalition, will moderate a panel discussion on "Youth and Millennials" at 11:30 a.m.

Other local panelists include: Ruben Flores-Marzan, director of planning and community development in Ware; Marcos Marrero, director of planning and economic development in Holyoke; Vimarit Davila, supervisor, River



Carlos Santiago

Valley Counseling, Holyoke; Heyda Martinez, director for the Institute for Maximizing Student Development, UMass-Amherst; Adam Gomez, city councilor, Springfield; Zulmalee Rivera, organizer, Neighbor 2 Neighbor Massachusetts, Springfield; and Victoria Ann Rodriguez, chair, Springfield Puerto Rican Parade.

The event is free and open to all. Lunch will be provided.

Other speakers and panels on the schedule include:

**9 a.m.:** Welcoming remarks by Christina Royal, HCC president; Betty Medina Lichtenstein, executive director, Enlace de Familias; and Carlos Varas Ramos, master of ceremony, Center for Puerto Rican Studies at Hunter College

**9:20 a.m.:** "State of Puerto Ricans in the United States," by Edwin

Melendez, director, Center for Puerto Rican Studies.

**10 a.m.:** Plenary session, "Puerto Rico's Political and Financial Crises — What's Next? Corruption, Transparency, Accountability and Good Governance," Gretchen Sierra-Zorita, moderator.

**11:30 a.m.:** Concurrent panels on "Youth and Millennials," "Economy, Planning and Social Entrepreneurship," and "Health, Mental Health and the Medicaid Financial Cliff."

**2:15 p.m.:** Plenary session, "Puerto Rico Solidarity and Engagement," moderated by Joe Rodriguez, deputy state director for U.S. Sen. Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn.

**3:45 p.m.:** Concurrent panels on "National Puerto Rican Student Coalition," "Models for Local Engagement and Empowerment," and "Stateside Impact of Hurricane Maria Evacuees."