

**Remarks offered by the
Honorable Secretary of
Public Health of Mexico City,
Dr. Armando Ahued Ortega,
before the Illinois Senate.**

Springfield, Illinois

April 13, 2016

Good afternoon honorable members of the Illinois Senate. On behalf of the Mayor of Mexico City, Dr. Miguel Angel Mancera, I thank you for the opportunity to speak before this legislative body.

Please allow me the indulgence to continue this message in Spanish.

The environmental situation that Mexico's capital faces, and the need to conduct a comprehensive strategy that responds to this issue, prevented Mayor Mancera's attendance.

His decision shows the commitment he has with the residents of Mexico City to protect their health and well-being.

On behalf of Mayor Mancera, I offer you a heartwarming apology and I ask for your understanding.

The invitation to speak before you represents a timely opportunity for strengthening the historical ties that bond Mexico and the United States, in particular Mexico City with Illinois. Our relationship can be felt in your streets with the large Mexican community that roams through your cities, and element that unite us in a very personal way.

This event reaffirms our willingness to continue working together, given that our interactions have always produced valuable contributions for Mexico City and Illinois, both distinguished by our struggles and work ethics.

Also, I would like to reaffirm Dr. Mancera's commitment and my own with the shared principle of respecting human rights as an unswerving premise.

Personally, I believe in the brotherhood among nations that grows stronger when governments work united for the well-being of their people.

This moment illustrates the brotherhood I just described, one that makes no distinctions, one that works for everybody without exclusions, so every person has the tools that allow them to better themselves in all aspects of their lives.

A fundamental right is access to quality health care that addresses our people's need to fulfill their physical and mental well-being. This right has a more prominent relevance when we deal with people in conditions of vulnerability.

Mexico City is one of the largest cities in the world, with close to 9 million residents and a “floating” population of more than 21 million people in all our metropolitan area. Its dimensions and demographic complexity forced us to create innovative strategies that allow the development of its residents through access to services and their integration socially and labor wise.

But we cannot consider a proper development of a person when he or she doesn't enjoy good health. When someone faces this disadvantage, it often limits his or her potential to join the work force.

One of the most prominent healthcare strategies in Mexico City is called Doctor In Your Home (Medico en tu Casa), initially launched to lower our index of maternal mortality.

Nonetheless, with the initial findings on its implementation we expanded the program to fulfill the demand the data at hand suggested. People who do not use care services and live on a situation of social exclusion that threatened to increase serious conditions among demographics without access to healthcare.

Having as guidance the principles of universality and free services that Mexico City implements on its core believe for social justice, the Mayor of Mexico City kicked off Doctor In Your Home in September 2014. Since then, we have visited 2.5 million homes, helping more than 198,000 vulnerable patients who were unable to go to a healthcare facility to receive care – people such as the elderly, the disabled, and patients with terminal conditions and people who don't have anyone looking out after them.

Also, we took care of 27,500 pregnant women, 31 percent of whom had not received medical assistance before. Among this group 40 percent had high-risk pregnancies.

Today, I am happy to report that we have had zero fatalities (maternal and babies) among women who participate in the program. With this achievement, we surpassed the initial goal set for Doctor In Your Home of lowering 75 percent of maternal and child fatalities.

Our program aims to provide preventive and humane health care offer in which the relationship between doctors and patients becomes more than a simple file number or visit the doctor's office. On the contrary, it envisions understanding the elements impacting the patient's family inner circle, and his or her community to better assess the social components of a patient's conditions.

What I just mentioned led us to include other government agencies to provide new services and social programs, such as legal counseling, assistance for the disabled, addiction treatment, attention to the elderly and more.

We launched our program with 3,000 healthcare employees across Mexico City: doctors, nurses, psychologists, social workers and dentists in multidisciplinary teams that visited thousands of homes of residents by regions.

When word got out about Doctor In Your Home and the work the Mancera administration is doing, participation was overwhelming. So far, we have healthcare "brigades" with more than 10,000 students from renowned public and private colleges who provide free healthcare and compile data to design new healthcare strategies.

In this context, a Memorandum of Understanding we signed this morning with the University of Illinois deserves a special mention. This agreement creates opportunity to share knowledge and experiences for research purposes that may inspire the creation of better policy on a global stage for the vulnerable and for the general population. Our goal is to bring awareness and to take action on the issues we face like metabolic disorders.

At this moment, please allow me to thank Senator Martin Sandoval for his invaluable contributions as a solid protector of immigrants' rights. Senator Sandoval's determination made possible this moment that, I am sure, will produce countless benefits to the state of Illinois and Mexico City. Thank you very much, Senator Sandoval.

The attributes of Doctor In Your Home, especially for the Latino community, aims to offer healthcare and research. With this new relationship, we are expanding our free services in Illinois, available only in Chicago for now.

- Telemedicine, our information calling center at 1-866-261-9004 provides psychological support, crisis intervention, and information for pregnant women and patients who suffer chronic conditions, as well as nutrition and veterinary counseling given by qualified personnel 24/7.
- We train volunteers whose job is to provide healthcare literacy, by promoting healthy eating, physical activity, mental and sexual health, prevention of gender-based violence and early detection of cancer. Also, we offer access in Spanish to the "Book of Healthcare Literacy" on our website, www.salud.df.gob.mx
- Through several agencies of Mexico City's government, we can also facilitate transferring immigrants to Mexico who, based on a medical condition, may require surgery in our network of hospitals.

Honorable members of the Senate, given that this initiative has proven its effectiveness, a bill about Doctor In Your Home was signed making it the law of the land in Mexico City, a status that makes it a permanent program and provides steady financing for implementation.

Because of its relevance, this program is under review by academia and healthcare institutions. In a little over a year since its launch, it has become a role model in other Mexican states, like Chiapas, Chihuahua, Sinaloa, Durango, Nuevo Leon, Tabasco and Tlaxcala, among others that are planning to implement it.

On the international stage, countries like Argentina, Colombia, Cuba, Guatemala, Kuwait, Panama, China and the Dominican Republic have expressed interest in learning about this program and sharing data and experiences.

Our determination to run a healthcare program of this magnitude was rooted in the need to offer accessible healthcare services to folks who lack of social protections. We believe that our patients' social conditions shall not limit the exercise of their rights, stop their individual or collective development, or make them subject to exclusion. That is what inspires our work.

Doctor In Your Home is a policy initiative that saves lives and promotes research. It is an investment for today and for the future of our society that offers free access to healthcare and protects one human right: the right to preserve someone's well-being.

Mexico City's government implements public policy that protects the rights of its residents. This is why our city is considered the City of Rights and Liberties.

This is the landmark of the administration led by Mayor Miguel Angel Mancera in Mexico City. We are a city that today strengthens its ties with the state of Illinois.

Thank you very much.