

## Andover child care advocate wins Latino Excellence Award

By Teddy Tauscher

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ANDOVER — The CEO of a Lawrence-based nonprofit organization specializing in early education and child care was recently honored by the Massachusetts Black and Latino Legislative Caucus with a Latino Excellence Award.

Andover resident Maria Gonzalez Moeller, CEO of The Community Group, was nominated for the honor by Rep. Tram Nguyen for her work in the community. The award was one of 60 given by legislators in recognition of Latino community leaders and pathfinders across the state.

“Her leadership has been instrumental in TCG’s growth and community partnerships, benefiting countless children and families,” according to a press release from Nguyen’s office.

The TCG runs programs centering around education and related services that support families, according to their website.

“Working alongside empowered community members and organizations fuels my desire to advocate for the early education field and for early education access,” said Gonzalez Moeller. “I want to express my heartfelt thanks to Representative Tram T. Nguyen for the nomination and to everyone who has supported our shared mission for a brighter, more inclusive future for all. Small steps can lead to extraordinary achievements when we work together.”

“Maria is a true champion of educational excellence, and her commitment to underserved communities is an inspiration,” said Nguyen. “It is my honor to nominate her for this well-deserved award, recognizing her exceptional service and advocacy in our region.”

Gonzalez Moeller has advocated for early education programs especially in locations where many children come from low-income households, according to the release. In addition to her work at that nonprofit she serves as vice chair of the Massachusetts Board of Early Education and Care, and is also a member on the Board of the Massachusetts Association of Early Education & Care.

“The influence of Latino folks in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts is omnipresent. It is an honor to showcase the accomplishments and elevates the impact that people of color make every day,” Zaven Billups, MBLLC executive director said. “This special annual forum is our way to do just that, bringing to the forefront those who often go unrecognized but are so greatly appreciated.”

A ceremony for the honorees was held on Oct. 26 in Gardner Hall at the State House.



Maria Gonzalez Moeller, right, was nominated for Latino Excellence Award by state Rep. Tram Nguyen, D-Andover. Courtesy of the office of Rep. Tram Nguyen