



## Lt. Governor Sabina Matos Reelection Kick Off Speech April 14, 2022

AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY

Thank you so much! I never imagined a day like this. I never imagined running for office. I never imagined that a girl from the Dominican Republic who spoke very little English and whose first job in the U.S. was working at a garment factory in New York would one day be **the first Black woman to hold statewide office in Rhode Island.**

But here we are. And I'm so glad we're here together.

I came to the United States 28 years ago with my mom, my dad and my sister. We came here because of the promise and optimism of new opportunities. It sounds corny, but we came here for the American Dream. And I'm proud to say that I'm living that dream.

The opportunities I've had and that my family have had are the kinds of opportunities that are truly only possible in the United States. But that doesn't mean it's always been easy. The challenges I've faced are similar to the challenges so many other Rhode Islanders have faced. And they have made us stronger.

I know what it's like to worry about making rent... What it's like to be up at night anxious about whether I'd still have an apartment the next month... What it's like to buy a home... What it's like to be a single mom. I know what it's like to be a parent... especially a parent during the pandemic when we had to play so many different roles in their lives. I know personally how this pandemic has impacted so many families. Like too many Rhode Islanders, I lost loved ones to COVID and spent endless hours at home while my father recovered in a hospital in isolation. And I know what it's like to care for or look after older parents and relatives.

**For as long as I'm your Lt. Governor, I will be a Lt. Governor for every Rhode Islander. I stand here today proud and humbled by the support of so many friends and family members to officially announce my campaign for reelection for Lt. Governor.**

We need to keep at it. ***¡vamos a seguir adelante!***

This campaign is about everyday Rhode Islanders and the issues that impact their families, their businesses, their neighborhoods. Since I was sworn in as Lt. Governor, I've visited all 39 cities and towns in Rhode Island and have been

reminded of why I chose this incredible state. And those visits have made clear that everyday Rhode Islanders are counting on us to build a resilient state.

**This is a campaign about housing.** In my visits across the state, I've talked to so many people who are working two or three jobs and still struggling to pay rent or find their first home. We cannot accept a reality where a family making \$50,000 a year can only afford to live in three communities. We need leaders who don't just talk about housing, but have a track record of supporting real housing initiatives.

Working with advocates and community leaders, I led efforts to revitalize blighted neighborhoods and build housing in Providence. And with Governor McKee's support, I'm proud to be playing a central role in the work to invest a record quarter billion dollars on housing to build affordable housing.

**Housing is the only proven solution for homelessness. Housing is health care. Housing is a fundamental right.**

**This is a campaign about access to education and job training.** The pandemic didn't create gaps in our schools, but it made the gaps a lot clearer. We cannot accept a reality where a student's access to broadband determines their ability to learn. The neighborhoods I represented in Providence were among the hardest hit by the pandemic and the students in my neighborhood faced some of the biggest challenges when schools went remote early on. In Providence, we worked quickly to ensure that every kid had access to the technology they needed to keep up, but we can't let up.

We also need to recognize that education doesn't end in the classroom. We need to include job training in every conversation we have about our schools.

**As your Lt. Governor, I've stood up for parents who want nothing more than the opportunity to send their kids to a great public school. And I'll continue to champion education policies that put kids first. ... Always.**

**This is a campaign about our seniors.** My mom has been such a part of my story. She gave me the courage to apply to and graduate from RIC. She was a teacher and administrator in the Dominican Republic and the first person in our family to go to college. She has always been my rock. She supported me as a young, single mom. She's always been a shoulder to cry on and a reliable cheerleader. My mom is my hero.

I need to tell you one story about my mom. My dad was one of the first COVID patients in Rhode Island. By the grace of God and thanks to the incredible doctors and nurses at Roger Williams Medical Center, he is still with us. But he suffers from long COVID and my mom has sacrificed so much to be by his side and care for him. The doctors saved his life, but mom's love and care gave him new life.

*Mamá, Papi, los amos infinitamente.*

Our parents are so important to all of us. They help shape our worldview and they were our first teachers. We owe them more as they age. The Office of Lt. Governor has a special role as the leading advocate for seniors in Rhode Island in large part because of Lt. Governor Fogarty's leadership 20 years ago. And I take that role seriously.

Rhode Island has one of the largest populations of older adults in America, but we're one of the worst states in the country for retirees. Rhode Island needs to be a better state for retirees and we need to stay committed to healthy aging.

Yesterday, I spent the morning with representatives of senior centers across the state and I pledged to use the full force of my office's bully pulpit to fight for Rhode Island's seniors.

**And this is a campaign about small business and job creation.** Small businesses are the lifeblood of Rhode Island's economy. And small business owners are the state's greatest job creators. The last two years have been incredibly hard on small business owners and their employees. As Lt. Governor, I'm working with the Governor to reduce Rhode Island's corporate minimum tax, make liquor-to-go permanent, and give small business owners relief on tangible taxes. That relief will give small business owners more flexibility to invest in their company, increase wages, and hire more people. And I'm fighting for minority owned businesses. We've proposed \$10 million for a minority business accelerator to promote entrepreneurship in underrepresented communities.

**Black and Latinx business owners deserve our support. They deserve our investment. They deserve a chance to compete. When Black and Latino businesses thrive, Rhode Island thrives.**

When I came to Rhode Island, I didn't know a guy. But I had a community I could lean on. Neighbors, friends, family members who stood there with me and helped me learn English, encouraged me to get my degree, pushed me to run for City Council. That unconditional support showed me that leadership is about showing up, is about listening, is about keeping your word, is about getting things done to help other people.

**I'm not the kind of leader who jumps on to a bandwagon or hitches my name to someone else's work. I'm not the kind of leader who chases trends or makes policy decisions based on hashtags.**

**I show up. I do the work. I get results. And I come back the next day and do it all again. Because that is what I was taught. Because that is what Black and Latina and women of color do. We work longer. We work harder. We work together. And we get the job done.**

This isn't a race about me, but it *is* a campaign about countless Rhode Islanders who have a similar story to mine. **A story of being underestimated and written off.** A story of resiliency. A story of inspiration. I know what it means for young Black and Latina girls to see a Black Latina Lt. Governor. It's a visible signal to countless young people that they can indeed be what they can see.

Governor McKee, I am sincerely thankful for the opportunity you've given me personally, but I'm even more thankful that you have followed through on your word to allow me to fully, authentically, and independently represent the people of Rhode Island through the lens of my lived experience.

All of us in this room... All of us in this state have done a lot together in the last 12 months, but there's a lot left to do. We can be proud of our progress, but we shouldn't be satisfied. This work doesn't end. And that's why I'm running for reelection as Rhode Island's Lieutenant Governor.

***¡vamos a seguir adelante!*** Let's keep at it! Thank you very much!

###