



**State of Connecticut**  
**Latino and Puerto Rican**  
**Affairs Commission**

18-20 Trinity Street  
Hartford, CT 06106  
Tel. (860) 240-8330  
Fax (860) 240-0315  
E-Mail: [lprac@cga.ct.gov](mailto:lprac@cga.ct.gov)  
Web Site: [www.cga.ct.gov/lprac](http://www.cga.ct.gov/lprac)

**Chairperson**  
*Carlos Alvarez*  
**Vice Chair**  
*Sonia P. Ayala*  
**Secretary**  
*Ivette Servera*  
**Treasurer**  
*Pablo Rivera*  
**Past Chairman**  
*Manuel García*

**Commissioners:**  
*Ramón L. Arroyo*  
*Luis A. Menéndez*  
*Ann E. Negron*  
*Alcides Ortiz*  
*Awilda Reasco*  
*Ed Rodríguez*  
*Norma Rodríguez-Reyes*  
*Maritza Tirú*

**Executive Director**  
*Fernando Betancourt*

**Special Projects**  
**Coordinator/Grants Writer**  
*Lucy Goicoechea-Hernández*

**Principal Legislative Analyst**  
*Werner Oyanadel*

**Legislative Analyst**  
*Vacant*

**Public Information Officer**  
*Karlo Ruiz*

**Senior Legislative Secretary**  
*Clarisa Cardone*

**Testimony of Fernando Betancourt**  
**Before the Appropriations Committee**  
**Friday, February 15, 2008 15<sup>th</sup>, 2008**  
**5:00 P.M. – Room 2C of the LOB in Hartford**

Good evening State Senator Harp, State Representative Merrill and honorable members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Fernando Betancourt, Executive Director of the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission (LPRAC). I am here to speak on behalf of the LPRAC in support of restoring all funding for interpreters under Medicaid.

The LPRAC is disappointed with the Governor's recommendation to eliminate all funding from the recently adopted law on interpreters under Medicaid. This is alarming to the LPRAC because there is significant data available that has identified language among one of the most serious barriers to a quality health care experience for Latinos living in our state.<sup>1</sup> It is clear that the inability for people to communicate with a health provider may have serious or fatal results; in Connecticut this is more problematic because there are more than 22,000 Medicaid recipients with Limited English Proficiency within a state with a diverse foreign-born population at about 12% based on 2004 data. It seems that both the Connecticut General Assembly (CGA) and the Governor had already agreed that medical interpretation was an important tool that could be used to decrease the prevailing ethnic and racial health disparities in Connecticut, which is presumably why it was signed into law several months ago. It is, therefore, the LPRAC's opinion that the Appropriations Committee of the CGA should restore all of the appropriated funds as recommended by Public Act 07-185. In 2007, for the record, it was estimated that it would require the Department of Social Services about five million dollars annually to amend the state Medicaid plan to include foreign language interpreter services and 50% of these costs would be reimbursed by the federal government under the Medicaid program.

Thank you for your attention on this matter and respectfully urge your support in both the Appropriations Committee as well as in the floor of the House and State Senate respectively.

---

<sup>1</sup> A Profile of Latino Health in Connecticut, Hispanic Health Council, December 2006