



State of Connecticut
Latino and Puerto Rican
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Testimony of Fernando Betancourt, Executive Director of the LPRAC
Before the Labor and Public Employees Committee
Friday, March 7th, 2008 at 12:00 p.m. in Room 2E of the LOB
In support of H.B. No. 5536 (RAISED) An Act Establishing the Connecticut
Healthcare Partnership

Good afternoon Senator Prague, State Representative Ryan and honorable members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee. My name is Fernando Betancourt, Executive Director of the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission (LPRAC). I am here on behalf of the LPRAC to speak in support of H.B. No. 5536 (RAISED) “*An Act Establishing the Connecticut Healthcare Partnership.*”

The plan, as delineated by H.B. No. 5536, would extend state employee insurance to Connecticut municipal employees, including teachers and create a pilot program that would allow small businesses and nonprofits access through a voluntary system. This system, according to several analysts, would be cost effective and it could potentially provide property tax relief for municipalities. Twenty-four states across the country have already adopted similar legislation, including Massachusetts, which opened its state employee plan earlier this year.

The LPRAC, for the record, supports legislation that endeavors to eliminate the incidence, and impact of environmental health problems in Latinos, and seeks tangible improvements in Latinos’ access to health coverage and high-quality, culturally competent health care for all. In Connecticut, according to many different sources, there are more than 400,000 people living without insurance. Latinos and African Americans make up a disproportionate share of those uninsured.¹ It is within this context that the LPRAC supports this initiative, which is among a number of approaches that have the potential to move the State of Connecticut closer to universal health care.

The LPRAC congratulates House Majority Leader Christopher G. Donovan (D-Meriden) for leading this effort and for his commitment to finding a tangible solution to the state’s healthcare crisis.

The LPRAC was created by the Legislature of the State of Connecticut through Public Act No. 94-152, taking effect February 1, 1995. LPRAC is part of the Legislative Branch and governed by Section 2-120 of the Connecticut General Statutes. The LPRAC is mandated to review and comment on any proposed state legislation that would affect the Latino population in the state.

¹Mapping Health Spending and Insurance Coverage in Connecticut, Jack A. Myer, Ph.D., and Jack Hadley, Universal Health Care Foundation 2006.