



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
Web Site: www.cga.ct.gov/lprac

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Testimony of Werner Oyanadel, Associate Legislative Analyst
Latino & Puerto Rican Affairs Commission
Judiciary Committee Public Hearing
Legislative Office Bldg., Room 2E, 1:30 P.M.
Hartford, Connecticut
February 24, 2006

Good Afternoon Co-Chairman – State Senator McDonald, State Representative Lawlor and honorable members of the Judiciary Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly (CGA). I am here today to speak on behalf of the Latino & Puerto Rican Affairs Commission (LPRAC) in support of Raised Bill Number 153, An Act Concerning the Interagency Task Force on Trafficking in Persons and Raised Bill Number 154, An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the Interagency Task Force on Trafficking in Persons.

For the record, my name is Werner Oyanadel, Associate Legislative Analyst of the State of Connecticut LPRAC. This statewide commission is mandated to review and comment on any proposed state legislation that would affect the Latino population in the state based on Public Act Number 94-152.

In October of 2004, the LPRAC received an invitation by then—State Representative Andrea L. Stillman— now a State Senator — to participate in a study group on trafficking of women and children in Connecticut. We were grateful for this invitation because we remain convinced that many Latinas and Latinos are falling prey to this abominable behavior. The goal of this study was to present a report with recommendations to the CGA for consideration in the 2004 Legislative Session. This legislative study determined that more information was required and as a result the CGA adopted Special Act 04-08, which established the current Task Force. The

LPRAC designated Commissioner Eva Maldonado as our representative and received staff support from the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW).

As you can read from the task force final report released last month, there is very little statewide data that can be utilized to paint a factual picture of the problem of trafficking in Connecticut thus far. We know at the national level from data released from the U.S. Department of State that more than 16,000 people are trafficked into the U.S. each year for forced labor and/or prostitution. In Connecticut according to a landmark immigrant study released by DemocracyWorks in November of 2005 indicated that 36% of Connecticut Immigrants in 2004 came either from the Caribbean, Mexico, Central America or South America. The report calculated that, from the total amount of immigrants in 2004, 19% were estimated as being undocumented aliens. This percentage is worth noting because this population may potentially be the target of traffickers. Case in point is, for instance, how the police in suburban New York on September 21, 2005 arrested a man from Greenwich, Connecticut for allegedly being the accomplice of a rape and kidnapping of an undocumented twenty-two year old Guatemalan woman, whom according to WABC-TV in New York and ABC news reports was a sex slave for a year and then was kidnapped when she tried to escape. According to investigators, the man from Greenwich, Connecticut paid \$5,000 to smuggle the woman into the country in 2004 from her home in Guatemala.¹

The most important recommendation from this task force – as we continue researching this subject matter for the CGA – is to enact a state-level anti-trafficking statute. Raised bill Number 154 would allow us to define and criminalize human trafficking in state law. It is the LPRAC's policy

¹ ABC News's Lucy Yang originally reported this story for WABC-TV in New York. ABC News Internet September 21, 2005.



argument that such a statute has the potential to enable better data for ongoing research and help victim advocates better tools to protect people from this nature of criminal activity. Raised Bill No. 153 includes additional recommendations that are technical in nature and are also recommended by LPRAC. Those recommendations include continuing the existence of the interagency task force, increase membership and expand the task force duties.

Thank you for your attention and we urge your positive vote.