Testimony of Werner Oyanadel, Associate Legislative Analyst for the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission
Judiciary Committee
Wednesday, April 4th, 2007
11:00 A.M. in Room 2C of the L.O.B.
Committee Bill No. 398
"An Act Establishing a Trafficking in Persons Council"

The Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission (LPRAC) is in support of creating a state council that would monitor trafficking of persons as delineated by Committee Bill Number 398, "An Act Establishing a Trafficking in Persons Council", which was sponsored by State Senator Andrea Stillman (D-20th Senatorial District)

The LPRAC is a working member of the Interagency Task Force on Trafficking in Persons at the request of State Representative Andrea Stillman – now a State Senator – in March of 2003. This Task Force officially convened in 2004 after it was determined by state officials that there was a need to conduct an in-depth study about the extent of human trafficking in Connecticut, analyze existing state criminal statutes on the subject, identify services to victims of trafficking and increase public awareness as an overall strategy to help the victims of these crimes. As a result of this research, it was determined that a statute that specifically defined and more importantly criminalized human trafficking was needed in order to take the most appropriate legal action against this type of criminal behavior – the new trafficking statute was adopted in 2006.

Although much of the problem of human trafficking is an “underground” crime, there is current anecdotal evidence that indicates that human traffickers target immigrants for their sex trade or manual labor. This is of extreme importance to the LPRAC because of the growing immigrant population
coming to the state. The latest statistics that we have show that 36 percent of the total amount of immigrants in the state comes from the Caribbean, South America, and Central America. Moreover, Latin Americans are increasing most rapidly, are the most recent immigrants, and unfortunately have the highest poverty rates. It is for these reasons that the LPRAC supports the passage of this proposal and accepts the invitation to be an official member of the council as written in the bill.

This legislation, if adopted, would also allow us to create a centralized response system to prevent and assist victims of these heinous crimes commonly targeting immigrant women and children. Equally important, the council would be able to forward policy recommendations to the General Assembly as it sees fit.

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.

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