

Alma Maya

Good afternoon, members of the committee and the public. Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to address you today. My name is Alma Maya, I live at 220 Funston Ave., BPT, CT and I am here in support of the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission.

I am here representing the views of the Greater Bridgeport Latino Network (GBLN), with a membership of over 300, including myself. I am also a member of the Statewide Concerned Citizens Committee. I am a former member of Governor Wiecker's Council on Hispanic Affairs, the precursor to LPRAC, and was a founding member and former commissioner/vice chair of LPRAC. Therefore, I have a strong understanding of its mission and history.

I also know first hand of the impact of LPRAC on our communities. As the former Executive Director of ASPIRA of CT, there were numerous occasions where I called on LPRAC to assist me in supporting ASPIRA's positions on pending legislation locally and before this body. LPRAC never failed to produce supporting evidence and also testify on behalf of fairness and equity in the areas of education, youth, housing, language rights, increased healthcare and other issues that impact on our Latino families. They have also served as your competent advisor as you deliberated on these issues.

I do not think that I need to explain to you about the growth of the Latino communities in CT. Or our gross under representation in local and State government and the fact that we are underserved. On many levels we are an invisible community.

I am sure you have received statistical data and research findings from LPRAC to support the need for the existence of this Commission. LPRAC serves as our voice. If you eliminate LPRAC you are in fact shutting us up!

Therefore, I would like to make the following arguments as to why you should not support the Governor's proposal to eliminate LPRAC. I would venture to say that many of these arguments would also apply to the other advisory commissions, such as the African American Affairs, Commission on Children, Asian American Affairs and Permanent Commission on the Status of Women. I believe there will come a time when these commissions will become obsolete. Unfortunately, that time is not now!

Here are some facts:

- The Governor is proposing cuts in the area of social services and aid to municipalities that directly impact our communities, especially our children;

- We are currently under represented on all government boards and commissions;
- We are currently under represented in State employment;
- We are currently under represented on the State legislature.

.Alma Maya

You should consider making cuts in other non essential areas and maintaining the advisory commissions, as is. In reality, you should not be balancing a budget on the backs of the already underserved. This is unfair and does not promote equity or good will.

Another proposal, consider consolidating all advisory commissions into one entity on a **temporary** basis. You can name it the ST of CT Commission on Minority Issues. Each area would keep an Executive Director, legislative analyst, publicist and a secretary. Each would keep its board of commissioners. They could share space and equipment. I feel that this is only a temporary measure and you can certainly put a future date in your proposal, to reconfigure the commissions.

Please do not ignore that Latinos are a growing population with growing voting power.

LPRAC has served our communities, our Governors and State legislature very well for a long time. You should not reward a job well done by killing it!

Thank you for your attention.