



State of Connecticut
Latino and Puerto Rican
Affairs Commission

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Karlo Ruiz

Senior Legislative Secretary
Clarisa Cardone

Testimony of Lina Lorenzi, Acting Director of the LPRAC
Before the Government Administration and Elections Committee

In opposition of SB 840 "An Act Concerning the Elimination of the Office of Consumer Counsel, the Office of the Healthcare Advocate, the Office of Ombudsman for Property Rights and Certain Legislative Commissions."

March, 16, 2009, in Room 2B of the LOB ~ 9:30 A.M.

Good morning State Senator Slossberg, State Representative Spallone, and honorable members of the Government Administration & Elections Committee. My name is Lina Lorenzi, Acting Director of the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission (LPRAC). I am here today to speak in opposition to SB 840.

We at the Commission realize the severity of the budget deficit that the State is facing. We would be remiss however, if we did not point out that it is our Latino community in Connecticut that has been and continues to be disproportionately targeted and underfunded both socially and economically. Although the elimination of LPRAC would be consistent with how the Latino community has been treated, it does not help solve the budget deficit, let alone our higher rate of unemployment, the need to create more affordable housing nor does it improve our lack of access to proper medical care and insurance coverage.

The Latino community is currently grossly under-represented in the halls of power with respect to appointments to those boards and commissions who ultimately make the economic, housing, education and health resource allocation recommendations to the Legislature and the Governor. Latinos make up 12 percent of Connecticut's total population. Yet of the 1,997 positions currently available on the 203 boards and commissions in the State hierarchy, only mere 3.2 percent of those positions are held by Latinos. To eliminate the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission would effectively eliminate the only body that speaks on behalf of the largest and fastest growing ethnic minority in the state and the nation. The one constituency that holds the very key for economic survival and revival for our state is once again being targeted and undermined.

LPRAC represents a community that historically has been denied the resources that many other Connecticut citizens take for granted. The incidence of chronic illness within the Latino community is much higher than that of other communities in the State. We at LPRAC are barely scratching the surface in being able to provide direct access to much-needed services for the Latino community. Through private grants received to the tune of over \$200,000 we began the preparation of a socio-economic study that clearly demonstrates the deplorable economic conditions and dire need within the Latino community. We have been able to use the statistics in that report to help us frame our annual legislative agenda in support of this under-represented population.

While we agree that cuts are sorely needed in order to make the state's budget much leaner and provide for a balanced budget for the current fiscal year and beyond, we believe a more surgical and strategic approach to balancing the budget is required. We feel that there are still areas that remain untapped in your budget that lend themselves for reduction and consolidation rather than an agency that provides a voice for an entire constituency in the state.

Moreover, we urge the Government Administration and Elections Committee not to move this bill forward and allow LPRAC and all other minority affairs commissions to continue serving populations that need a voice at the table of those decision makers who need to hear these communities' needs and concerns first-hand.

Though you might save a few dollars, I can guarantee that the damage you will do in these communities, will be paid for not only by our children, but our children's grandchildren.

Thank you.



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MEMORANDUM

To: Government Administration and Elections Committee (GAE)
From: Lina Lorenzi, Acting Director of the LPRAC
Date: March 16, 2009
Re: Senate Bill Number 840

The LPRAC is attaching to this memo copies of testimony provided in support of the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission at the Appropriations Committee Public Hearing of February 11, 2009 for your review. The LPRAC believes that these documents accurately reflect the sentiment of the community in support of the LPRAC and because of the connection to the content of Senate Bill number 840 we are forwarding it to the members of the GAE Committee for the Public Hearing of March 16 as evidence that should be included in the official file for SB No. 840.

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.

RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
ATTORNEY GENERAL



55 Elm Street
P.O. Box 120
Hartford, CT 06141-0120

Office of The Attorney General
State of Connecticut

*TESTIMONY OF
ATTORNEY GENERAL RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
BEFORE THE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
FEBRUARY 11, 2009*

I appreciate the opportunity to support the continued funding of the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission.

I add my voice as well to many others supporting the other commissions whose existence is threatened -- the African-American Affairs Commission, the Asian Pacific Americans Commission, the Commission on Aging, the Commission on Children and the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women.

The Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission provides significant advocacy for a significant community with unique and profoundly important needs. The Commission is also a critical forum for bringing together the diverse segments of that community and focusing on public issues of particular importance to Latinos.

For the past 13 years, the Commission has championed many issues -- including Spanish interpreters for courts, a minority health council, tougher regulations for predatory lending and improving diversity in health services. The Commission compiles a comprehensive socio-economic study on the Latinos residing in the state.

The Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission, along with the African-American Affairs Commission, the Asian Pacific Americans Commission, the Commission on Aging, the Commission on Children and the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women, provide critical information to the legislature and the public on how policies impact their communities. The General Assembly makes better policy decisions because of their input.

I urge the committee to continue funding these commissions to ensure that our state policies are developed with a solid, informed base of knowledge.

**Testimony for the record by Eddie A. Perez
Mayor, City of Hartford**

Submitted to:

The Connecticut General Assembly

Appropriations Committee

February 11, 2009

Hearing on Permanent Commission on the Status of Women, Commission on Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs, African American Affairs Commission, and Commission on Aging

Good afternoon Chairs Harp and Geragosian and members of the Appropriations Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of **The Permanent Commission on the Status of Women, The Commission on Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs, The African American Affairs Commission, and The Commission on Aging.**

Connecticut is a State rich in diversity; a fact evidenced today by the wide range of ethnicities, ages, and interests represented in this room. This year's budget calls for the elimination of a number of Commissions that work to protect and nurture that diversity. Without question the State of Connecticut's economic woes demand that we as elected officials and constituents make some very difficult choices. However, we must be mindful of the long-range impact of those choices.

To fully appreciate the consequence of losing any one of the Commissions before you for comment this afternoon, I ask that you to consider the extraordinary work that each of them has done up to today.

The Permanent Commission on the Status of Women has and continues to aggressively pursue the elimination of sex discrimination in the State of Connecticut. To that end **The Commission** advocates not only for women's equity alone, but for a wide range of concerns that impact many of us; from family-friendly policies in the work place, to education, to health.

The Permanent Commission on the Status of Women provides law makers with the information they need to make informed decisions on how legislation will affect women throughout the State. **The Commission** also acts as a conduit between government and the private interest groups and citizens who are invested in services and opportunity for women.

The mission of **The Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission** is the advancement of the Latino and Puerto Rican Communities in the State of Connecticut. **The LPRAC** has worked to earn a number of successes since its creation, helping to pass legislation improving the ease of access to education and health care in the Latino Community. **The Commission** has placed a strong focus on those health issues that plague the Latino community, fighting against HIV/AIDS, lead poisoning, and asthma.

The Commission provides a unique information service, offering lawmakers and the community publishing the only comprehensive socio-economic study for the Latinos in Connecticut. Additionally, The LPRAC has fought for issues whose impact extends beyond just the Latino community; from comprehensive immigration reform at the national level to greater legal representation for abused and neglected children.

In the twelve short years since its inception The African American Affairs Commission has worked diligently to protect and promote the interests of Connecticut's African American population. The Commission was instrumental in the passing of key legislation to curb gun violence, combat hate crime, and restore voting rights to the more than 50,000 Connecticut men and women who've served prison sentences.

The African American Affairs Commission has also taken a strong proactive role in the community. Their "Know How to Go" and "College Goal Sunday" programs have provided over 15,000 first generation and economically disadvantaged children in this State with the tools needed to access higher education. The Commission also works with national health organizations to increase awareness and prevention of chronic diseases and promote good health in the African American community.

The Connecticut Commission on Aging has been committed to improving the lives of Connecticut's older adults for over 16 years. As Connecticut's one million baby boomers grow older, The Commission is needed now more than ever to help prepare us for this demographic change.

The Commission has put forth legislation improving the lives of Connecticut's older population. In 2008 The Commission established the Aging and Disability Resource Center which has allowing senior citizen's greater individual choice concerning their long term care. The Commission has also worked to expand and simplify several Medicaid program options, as well as to address the concerns surrounding an aging workforce and the growing need for elder care.

As you've heard, the Commissions put before you for comment this afternoon have made important gains for the communities that they represent. Certainly now more than ever before minorities have greater representation at all levels of government. Still, the work of these Commissions is not yet complete. If any one of them were shuttered, it would mean an end to coordinated and informed advocacy for the constituencies they represent. Both the economic and social cost of losing those voices would be far greater than any savings made by eliminating the Commissions.

Thank you.



Hispanic-American Veterans of Connecticut, Inc. (HAVOCT)
Connecticut's First Hispanic-American Veterans Community Organization
A 501 c 3 Organization

February 10, 2009

Honorable Toni Harp, Co-Chair
Senator
Honorable Juan Candelaria, Co-Chair
State Representative
Appropriations Committee
State Legislature
State of Connecticut
300 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Sen. Harp & Rep. Candelaria:

The Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission has been a vital part of the Hispanic community for the past 14 years. It was the Legislature, in keeping with current trends of addressing the issues of a growing community, who had the foresight to establish this Commission in the first place. It behooves the Legislature to continue to recognize how vital it is for this agency to continue serving the needs of the Hispanic population in Connecticut.

The Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission has been the voice of the Hispanic community in many areas including health, education, immigrant issues and youth to just name a few. They have been instrumental in working with many partners in the community and helped HAVOCT, Inc to advocate and pass HB #5799 which provided bilingual VSO services at DVA.

The Hispanic community has been hurting for many more years than the current harsh economic times. It would be so detrimental to do away with an agency that can bring those major concerns to the table of those with the power and influence to be able to make the situation just a little better for those under-served in areas of employment, housing, health and education.

We implore the Appropriations Committee and, through it, the Legislature to recognize the value of this organization and ensure that it remains a part of the State budget. We are sure that they can agree to institute any and all measures that will assist with this hard economic downturn but to remove them now would be to silence a huge population that is in dire need of services at this time. Hispanic veterans are faring a little better for LPRAC's intervention.

We can be reached at 860-721-5849 should you have any questions and stand ready to provide testimony if it would help their cause.

Respectfully,

Juan L. Cruz

Juan L. Cruz, Interim President

Executive Board

MAJ Lesbia I. Nieves
President

SSG Juan L. Cruz
Interim President

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Sergeant at Arms

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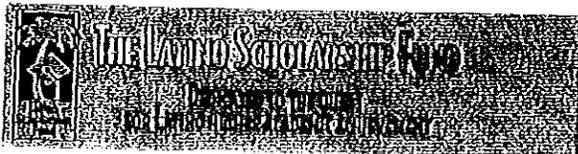
SSG Luis R. Centeno
Advisor

SFC Carmelo Figueroa
Honor Guard

Elsa Huertas
Personnel Services

Edith Miller
Historian & Photographer

SSG (RET) Dolores Nieves
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Alba Skar
Dr. James W. Schmotter
Paula Taborda
Heana Velazquez
Advisor's
Todd C. Howe
Emilio Olabarrleta

February 11, 2009

Dear Appropriations Committee Member:

The Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission has been a vital part of the Hispanic community for the past 14 years. It was the Legislature, in keeping with current trends of addressing the issues of a growing community, who had the foresight to establish this Commission in the first place. It behooves the Legislature to continue to recognize how vital it is for this agency to continue serving the needs of the Hispanic population in Connecticut.

The Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission has been the voice of the Hispanic community in many areas including health, education, immigrant issues and youth to just name a few. They have been instrumental in working with many partners in the community such as the Department of Education, the Department of Social Services, Department of Public Health and Administrative Services to ensure that the programming available within those organizations is readily made available to the Hispanic community statewide.

The Hispanic community has been hurting for many more years than the current harsh economic times. It would be so detrimental to do away with an agency that can bring those major concerns to the table of those with the power and influence to be able to make the situation just a little better for those under-served in areas of employment, housing, health and education.

We implore the Appropriations and, through it, the Legislature to recognize the value of this organization and ensure that it remains a part of the State budget. We are sure that they can agree to institute any and all measures that will assist with this hard economic downturn but to remove them now would be to silence a huge population that is in dire need of services at this time.

We can be reached at 203-739-5636 should you have any questions and stand ready to provide testimony if it would help their cause.

Respectfully,

Abner Burgos-Rodriguez

Abner Burgos-Rodriguez

Chair

Latino Scholarship Fund



February 11, 2009

Dear Appropriations Committee Member:

On behalf the Spanish American Merchants Association, a non-profit organization that provides technical assistance to small business owners. I would like to state that the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission have been very instrumental to our organization and our community. The commission has assisted our organization with opening of our Willimantic office, assisting our merchants with the WIC program and has also supported many of our projects. They have been a vital link to other community agencies as well.

We ask that you reconsider to maintain the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission in the State budget so that they can continue with their work.

Respectfully
Cesar Mejia
Board Vice President

SPANISH AMERICAN MERCHANTS ASSOCIATION
95 Park Street, Hartford CT 06106 Tel: 860-278-5825 Fax: 860-241-9000
235 Grand Avenue, New Haven CT 06513 Tel: 203-860-0522 Fax: 203-865-0355
872 Main Street, Willimantic CT 06226 Tel: 860-423-8400 Fax: 860-423-4800
www.samaact.org



Society of Latin American Firefighters
120 Spruce Street
Manchester, Connecticut 06040

February 10, 2009

Honorable Toni Harp, Co-Chair
Senator
Honorable Juan Candelaria, Co-Chair
State Representative
Appropriations Committee
State Legislature
State of Connecticut
300 Capitol Avenue
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The Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission has been the voice of the Hispanic community in many areas including health, education, immigrant issues and youth to just name a few. They have been instrumental in working with many partners in the community and we have supported their efforts at their annual leadership and student recognition for many years.

The Hispanic community has been hurting for many more years than the current harsh economic times. It would be so detrimental to do away with an agency that can bring those major concerns to the table of those with the power and influence to be able to make the situation just a little better for those under-served in areas of employment, housing, health and education.

We implore the Appropriations and, through it, the Legislature to recognize the value of this organization and ensure that it remains a part of the State budget. We are sure that they can agree to institute any and all measures that will assist with this hard economic downturn but to remove them now would be to silence a huge population that is in dire need of services at this time.

We can be reached at 860-836-3987 should you have any questions and stand ready to provide testimony if it would help their cause.

Sincerely,

Joey Huertas

Joey Huertas, President



NASW

National Association of Social Workers / Connecticut Chapter

2139 Silas Deane Highway
Suite 205
Rocky Hill, CT 06067
(860) 257-8066

Sherry Ostrout, MSW, CMC, President
Stephen A Karp, MSW, Executive Director
naswct@conversent.net

Appropriations Committee Public Hearing

**In Support of the Human Rights Commissions
February 11, 2009**

**Submitted By: Sherry Ostrout, MSW, CMC
President**

SENATOR HARP, REPRESENTATIVE GERAGOSIAN, and members of the Appropriations Committee. On behalf of the National Association of Social Workers, Connecticut Chapter, representing over 3400 members, I submit this public testimony in support of the 5 human rights Commissions and the office of the Health Care Advocate.

NASW, for years, has provided informed positions on a number of important topics as it relates to our social work members and those we serve through social work services. We create a legislative agenda and establish priorities through our membership networks and committees. Last night, NASW's Board of Directors passed a resounding and unanimous priority resolution to support the maintenance of the five human rights Commissions -- Aging, Children, Women, Latino and African American affairs and additionally the Office of the Healthcare Advocate.

During this time of extraordinary financial challenge it is desperately and of utmost importance, to maintain the human rights commissions that provide the non-partisan, research based public policy analysis that we can rely upon. We rely upon the Commissions to analyze public policy impact, national trends and provide Connecticut specific recommendations on efficiencies all within the important context of an independent voice. If this expertise or independent voice was duplicated in any other legislative or executive department NASW would not be providing this testimony. The Commission's are not redundant, they are not duplicative and they are not fluff.

The Commission on Aging, as one example, has a proven history of bringing providers, advocates, the executive and legislative branches together over initiatives that, in this year alone, led to recommendations that can save the state \$600 million dollars. During a time where long term care issues and costs are growing at alarming rates, during a time of enormous expansion of the older adult population we need the Commission on Aging to help lead our state as the demands, we know, will not diminish.

On behalf of the National Association of Social Workers in Connecticut and our 3,400 members, we ask the Appropriations Committee to support the Commission's through supportive funding for this critical and necessary independent work.



Hispanos Unidos, Inc.
116 Sherman Avenue • New Haven, Connecticut 06511

Executive Director
Luz Z. González

Tel: 203-781-0226
Fax: 203-781-0229

February 10, 2009

Dear Legislative Members:

I am writing this letter on behalf of all the Latinos in Connecticut that at some point have been involved with The Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission. We as Latinos have worked hard to maintain the Commission with our support and participation in many venues of importance to us. I am urging the Governor to reconsider keeping the Commission that is so vital to both the Latino Community and the State of Connecticut.

Latinos in Connecticut continue to grow not only in numbers, but also as part of the economic growth of this state. This has been in part of the work that the Commission has done. The commission has been part of identifying members of the Latino community for other commissions and boards key to the work of the state and government. Therefore, I cannot stress enough the importance of maintaining this Commission.

If you would like more information or if I can be of further assistance, you may contact me at lgonzalez@hispanos-unidos.org or 203-781-0226. Thank you in advance for any consideration given to this request.

Sincerely,

Luz Z. González, MS
Executive Director
Hispanos Unidos, Inc.

"Cuida tu Salud"



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Exhibit on File

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Legislative Analyst II
 Ana Lorenz, Esq.

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 Karlo Ruiz

Senior Legislative Secretary
 Clarisa Cardone

Testimony of the LPRAC before the Appropriations Committee
 Wednesday, February 11, 2009
 Room 2C of the Legislative Office Building, Hartford, Connecticut
 H.B. No. 6365 "An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium ending
 June 30, 2011, and Making Appropriations Therefor"

Good afternoon State Senator Harp, State Representative Geragosian and honorable members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Ed Rodriguez, a Commissioner of the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission (LPRAC), Chairman of the Priorities & Legislation committee of the LPRAC and the designated speaker on behalf of the LPRAC today.

History

The LPRAC was created by the Connecticut General Assembly in 1994 via Public Act 94-152, taking effect February 1, 1995. The LPRAC is part of the Legislative branch and is governed by section 2-120 of the Connecticut General Statutes as amended by Public Act number 03-229. The initial appointees to the thirteen board members included all the members of the Governor's Council for Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs established by Executive Order Number Ten by Governor Lowell P. Weicker, Jr.

Mission Statement and Legislative Mandate

The LPRAC's mission as stipulated in statute is to coordinate and provide access to resources by developing and recommending to the Governor and the Legislature policy for the advancement of the Latino and Puerto Rican community by:

The commission shall:

1. Review and comment on any proposed state legislation and regulations that would affect the Latino and Puerto Rican populations in the state and provide to the members of the General Assembly copies of any such comments;
2. Advise and provide information to the Governor and the General Assembly on the state's policies concerning the Latino and Puerto Rican communities;
3. Advise the Governor and the General Assembly concerning the coordination and administration of state programs serving the Latino and Puerto Rican populations;
4. Maintain a liaison between the Latino and Puerto Rican communities and governmental entities, including, but not limited to, the General Assembly;
5. Encourage Latino and Puerto Rican representation at all levels of state government, including state boards and commissions, and maintain an accessible list of prospective appointees who are members of the Latino or Puerto Rican community;
6. Secure appropriate recognition of the accomplishments and contributions of Latino and Puerto Rican populations of the state;
7. Work in consultation with the joint committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to legislative management for the purpose of establishing a plan of short-term and long-term initiatives based on the needs of the Latino and Puerto Rican community; and
8. Prepare and submit to the Governor an annual report concerning its activities with any appropriate recommendations concerning the Latino and Puerto Rican populations of the state and submit a copy of the report to the joint committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to legislative management, which committee shall distribute a copy of the report to each member of the General Assembly.

Summary of Performance

Thus far, the LPRAC has published the only report on the socioeconomic status of Latinos throughout the state. Moreover, in order to respond to one of our legislative mandates, the commission has held annual Gala-Award events in celebration of the accomplishments of the many outstanding adult and youth leaders in our community. Furthermore, the LPRAC has developed a Legislative Agenda and testified before the Connecticut General Assembly on a broad range of issues dealing with education, healthcare, housing, judicial, and economic development. The LPRAC has been successful in providing information about legislation that has later been adopted into law such as the creation of Individual Development Account Programs, and the restoration of voting rights just to mention a few examples. The LPRAC continues generating data for lawmakers on issues such as the Housing Mortgage Crisis, HIV/AIDS, Lead Poisoning, and Asthma. Furthermore, the LPRAC has successfully worked in partnership with Connecticut lawmakers, federal, state, and municipal elected officials on issues such as the effects of workplace discrimination, redistricting, trafficking of persons, domestic violence in immigrant communities and immigration reform. Finally, the conferences and programs initiated by the LPRAC includes the Reflecting Connecticut Project, Dual Language training, homeownership conferences, money management, and about the landmark State Supreme Court case of Sheff, Bermudez vs. O'Neill.

The demands on the LPRAC have continued to increase with more and more elected officials, members of the public and institutions seeking our expertise in a broad range of areas of extreme technical difficulty. In 2007, for instance the immigrant communities began to mobilize through-out the State of Connecticut seeking help on different problem areas and the LPRAC stood up to the challenge and advocated in the legislature in support of state-sponsored healthcare programs for legal immigrants, drafted the language for the in-state tuition bill that would have provided in-state tuition to the children of immigrants, and collaborated with other state leaders in support of the creation of a Trafficking in Persons Council.

In the education front the LPRAC began a partnership between the Deputy Commissioner of the State Department of Education to look for ways to improve education outcomes for Latino students and played an important advisory role to the Commissioner of Education's proposed plan for Secondary School Reform Legislation – a plan that sees student success by the connection between 21st Century Learning, Engagement, and Rigor. The LPRAC among other recommendations submitted in writing to the Education Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly (CGA) or with direct meetings with the Co-Chairs of Education in the past few years include the following recommendations: (1) that the CGA substantially increase state investments in pre-school education, (2) reduce the segregation and the concentration of poor students in Connecticut schools, (3) improve teacher certification requirements, (4) increasing capacity in school readiness programs for low-income students, (5) mandate that the State Department of Education prepare a comprehensive plan of intervention in non-performing schools under the Federal No Child Left Behind Act, and (6) provide the Connecticut Mastery test to Limited English Proficient students in their native language.

The LPRAC is also an active member of the Commission on Racial and Ethnic Disparity in the Criminal Justice System (REDCJS), which was created by the Connecticut state legislature to make recommendations on how to eliminate racial and ethnic disparities in the criminal justice system. In October 22, 2008 the LPRAC collaborated with the REDCJS at the helm of the Honorable Lubie Harper Jr. in an event entitled *Disparity in Connecticut: Where are We Now and Where are we Heading*, which will help us respond to our legislative charge on developing and recommending policies to reduce the number of Latinos and African-Americans in our criminal justice system as well as the number of minorities who are victimized by crime. This far reaching charge requires the Commission to examine every aspect of the systems from arrests to dispositions as well

as how the public perceives the face of the system. The REDCJS is currently focusing all its efforts on finding ways to keep the children and the youth to stay away from the criminal justice system and the LPRAC already made specific recommendations to the REDCJS of the importance of prioritizing efforts that study the adequacy of the number of court interpreters, competence of legal representation for underprivileged Latino defendants with Limited English Proficiency and most importantly to make recommendations to the CGA and to the Governor's Office to increase the number of Latino judges, which is currently about 2.6 percent of the total positions currently available within a population size already surpassing the 12 percent mark.

At the beginning of 2008 the LPRAC – before a room full of community leaders, concerned members of the public, and the press – announced the findings of the LPRAC's fourth and most comprehensive Socio-Economic Study. The LPRAC utilized the results of this report to prepare its 2009 Legislative agenda. This report indicated that a growing number of Latino families living in Connecticut's five largest cities continue experiencing a declining standard of living. The declining economy is only adding to the burden of these working families, forcing many of them to work multiple jobs to keep a float. At the time of the announcement the LPRAC advised both the Governor and the legislature to react through policy that bears clear and tangible change to avoid a larger economic crisis.

In July of 2008, the LPRAC conducted a summit entitled *Connecticut Families in an Ailing Market: a Summit on Housing* at the Legislative Office Building to study the impact of the housing mortgage crisis on the state's Latino and minority populations. The LPRAC invited a series of national and state experts to talk about the topic and intended to motivate public dialogue and policy discussion among the experts and policymakers alike.

The LPRAC in coalition with other state election officials and other Latino organizations worked on a campaign entitled “¡Tu Voto Si Cuenta!” or “Your Vote Does Count!” which endeavored to register 10,000 new Latino voters across the state. The LPRAC specifically helped establish volunteer committees in Bridgeport, Danbury, Hartford, Meriden, New Britain, New London, Wallingford, Waterbury, and Willimantic. This effort was the first of its kind in the state and the ultimate results of the campaign showed that a total of 25,570 Latinos registered to vote via the “¡Tu Voto Si Cuenta!” For comparison purposes, keep in mind that to the best of our knowledge there are about 90,000 Latinos registered to vote in Connecticut, which is less than half of the citizen voting age population. In other words the LPRAC's efforts resulted in a Latino voter registration increase of 24% not bad for an effort with almost no monetary investments from the state.

The LPRAC also continues responding to our legislative mandate which stipulates that it must secure the appropriate recognition of the accomplishments and contributions of the Latino and Puerto Rican population of the state. In 2007 the LPRAC bestowed its Latino Citizen of the Year Award to Bishop Peter A. Rozazza for his leadership in the area of help to Latino immigrants. Mrs. Leticia Colon was awarded the Latina Citizen of the Year Award for her commitment to helping mentally challenged adults succeed through social integration. The LPRAC thus far has recognized 10 agencies for their work on their communities and so far awarded \$45,000.00 dollars from private grants to Latino students for their academic success. In 2008 the LPRAC awarded Dr. Agnes Quiñones and Dr. Francisco Donis the Latina/o Citizen of the Year Award and announced that the LPRAC would double their scholarship monetary awards to about \$85,000.00 for the Fiscal Year of 2009. These award-ceremonies bring together about one thousand guests from throughout the state to recognize the Latino community's best and brightest, and celebrate the achievements of leaders, organizations and students. All of which is

performed using no state funds. In 2008 the LPRAC raised more than \$100,000.00 in private contributions to make this possible.

The Commission is also active making recommendations to the Connecticut General Assembly regarding increasing access to healthcare to the Latino community. In 2007, for instance, the LPRAC assisted the legislature passing legislation that mandates the Commissioner of Social Services to work with the LPRAC on the development of an outreach effort through the Latino media to increase Latino children's enrollment in the Healthcare for Uninsured Kids and Youth (HUSKY) program. The LPRAC is also an active member of the legislature's HealthFirst Connecticut Authority Committee, which is mandated to examine and evaluate different alternatives for providing all Connecticut residents quality, affordable, and sustainable healthcare; and a member by state statute to the Commission on Health Equity within the Office of the Health Care Advocate to work to (1) eliminate disparities in health status based on race, ethnicity, and linguistic ability and (2) improve the quality of health for all state residents (Public Act 08-171). Furthermore, the LPRAC played a big role in directing the first ever-national grant for a tobacco secession program designed to protect Connecticut Latinos from the dangers of tobacco use. This program was entitled "Latino no Fumes Protége tu Salud – Latino don't Smoke Protect Your Health" presented in partnership with the Hartford Hospital through a grant totaling \$497,055 given by the American Legacy Foundation for a three year program.

The LPRAC was also part of a successful coalition that advocated in support of Hispanic veterans for a new mandate requiring the State Department of Veteran Affairs hire bilingual staff. The bill was introduced by State Representative Kelvin Roldan (D-4th House District) in collaboration with the Hispanic American Veterans of Connecticut, Inc. The bill was given unanimous vote in both chambers of the CGA and it was signed into law by the Governor on June 11, 2007.

Current LPRAC Recommendations

At the beginning of last year, the LPRAC released the fourth edition of the Latino Socio-Economic Status study, which alerted policy makers of a declining standard of living for Latinos in Connecticut. This survey indicated that the most pressing issues for Latinos were tax relief, high healthcare costs, and education reform. Moreover, the LPRAC stood side by side with the Hispanic Health Council when they informed the Connecticut legislature, about a year ago, of an existing health crisis affecting disproportionately the Latino population. All of these alerts happened prior to the home mortgage meltdown of 2008 which generated another set of economic problems across the country. All in all, the LPRAC believes this recession, if not managed wisely, will disproportionately affect the Latino community and that is a cost the state cannot afford to undertake.

It is within this context that the LPRAC recommends that the Connecticut General Assembly (CGA) provides tax relief, strengthen state services that aim to help families during this recession, reshuffle state priorities to be able to afford education reform legislation and provide affordable health care coverage for all state residents. In specific, the state should suspend foreclosure sales for six months, and continue funding Latino agencies that provide job training for the unemployed, food and shelter to the homeless, healthcare coverage to the uninsured and after school programs for the youth.

The LPRAC also recommends that Connecticut policymakers prioritize legislation that endeavors to help Latino businesses thrive during a national economic downturn and a worsening credit crisis. Latino entrepreneurs making investments in Connecticut are feeling the weight of this economic crisis and are going to need access to capital to stay competitive. Recently, Governor Rell announced a \$100 Million loan program for

Connecticut businesses as part of the Governor's "Four-Point" Credit Plan to ensure the continued free flow of credit in the state's economy. The LPRAC is supportive of this plan; however, the LPRAC does not believe that these funds are trickling down to Latino businesses, therefore we urge the Governor the legislature to ensure that this growing segment of the industry have equal access to those resources already available.

Furthermore, the LPRAC will reach-out to the Black and Puerto Rican Caucus of the CGA to work on ways to increase judicial nominations of minority judges serving on Connecticut state courts; LPRAC wants to work with the leadership of the CGA on legislation that helps Latino immigrant families on issues of higher-education, hate crimes, and domestic violence.

Finally, the LPRAC will make recommendations to state appointing authorities about the need to diversify the State of Connecticut's boards, and commissions. It is one of the LPRAC's most important mandates to "encourage Latino and Puerto Rican representation at all levels of state government, including state boards and commissions" and a major requirement of the law is that appointing authorities consider gender and race when making their appointments. However, from the latest racial composition report released by the Secretary of the State, there was insignificant change in representation of minority groups between 2005 and 2007. In both years, members of minority groups were significantly underrepresented. Specifically for our community, although the population increased from around 9.4 percent to 11.2 percent during this period, our representation for boards and commission went from 3.1 percent to 3.2 percent – a disappointing score card.

Unified Front in Support of all legislative Commissions

The LPRAC have collaborated throughout the years with the other key commissions of the legislature: Commission on Children, Permanent Commission on the Status of Women and the African-American Affairs Commission on various projects. We represented the Latino community on the Commission on Children's Early Childhood Partnership as they drafted language to obtain funding for early childhood education. We worked in partnership with the Permanent Commission on the Status Women and the African-American Affairs Commission on the RefleCTing Connecticut/Reflejando a Connecticut initiative whose focus was to ensure diverse appointments on the state's boards and commissions by legislative leaders and the Governor. We all participated on the Women's Health Campaign Committee, in the annual Making Women Visible program and a collaborative on the uniform presentation of the talent bank information to the legislative leaders. The LPRAC, for the record, testified in support of the creation of the Asian American Affairs Commission and remains supportive of their efforts to be part of the legislative branch of Government.

Closing statement

The LPRAC looks forward to working in partnership with the Governor and the CGA to address and solve the problems affecting the Latino community. As the legislative mandate that created the LPRAC states, we have been and continue to be ready to work with the Governor and the legislature; all that we ask is to be invited to the table as a partner, active contributor and the only voice that speaks on behalf of all Latinos in the State of Connecticut.



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February 10, 2009

Senator Toni Harp, Co-Chair
Rep. Juan Candelaria, Co-Chair
Appropriations Committee
Legislative Office Building
300 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Senator Harp and Representative Candelaria:

I am writing this letter in support of the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission (LPRAC) in response to Governor M. Jodi Rell's proposal to eliminate this important statewide commission. In 1994, the CT State Legislature created LPRAC in order to reach out to, effectively represent and speak out for the Latino population that represents Connecticut's largest minority group.

Since 1995, the LPRAC has played a pivotal role in recommending legislation that has later been adopted into law, such as the creation of Individual Development Account (IDA) Programs and the restoration of voting rights. LPRAC also continues generating key data on issues ranging from HIV/AIDS, lead poisoning and asthma, and publishes the only comprehensive socio-economic study on the status of Latinos in Connecticut.

Furthermore, the LPRAC leverages its partnerships with lawmakers, federal and municipal elected officials, and national civil rights leaders to affect change on issues such as workplace discrimination, redistricting, human trafficking and immigration reform. They have advised and provided information to the Governor and the General Assembly on the state's policies concerning the Latino and Puerto Rican community. LPRAC has also provided guidance to the Governor and the General Assembly concerning the coordination and administration of state programs serving the Latino and Puerto Rican population.

In July 2008, LPRAC hosted a state-wide housing summit that drew representatives from the State Banking Commission, the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority, State Legislators, members of the Commission's Board in collaboration with SINA, and private foundations. This was an important opportunity to provide critical information to community based organizations and government agencies about how the foreclosure crisis has disproportionately affected Latinos in Connecticut and the resources available to assist homeowners.

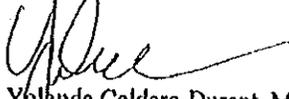
Although LPRAC has made significant strides in its efforts, more work still needs to be done to help Latinos close the gaps that exist in obtaining high quality health care, better educational opportunities, access to affordable housing, and securing living wage jobs.

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We urge that Governor Rell and the Connecticut Legislature reconsider their decision to eliminate the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission which is a critical resource and serves a vital purpose as one of the instruments the legislature and the Governor can seek out whenever it needs information on one of its large and growing constituencies in Connecticut. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Yolanda Caldera-Durant, M.S.

Program Director

Economic Opportunity & Health and Human Services

Cc: Representative Minnie Gonzalez

To the Members of the Appropriations Committee:

Distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee my name is Bonnie Lebron and I am here this evening to speak on behalf of the Latino & Puerto Rican Affairs Commission better known as LPRAC. I am a Latino Social Worker and a member of a bilingual, public speaking club known as LPRAC Toastmaster. This club has been under the auspices of the agency for the almost 10 years and promotes the change and empowerment of its member through the improvement of communication and leadership skills. It is the only Spanish and English public speaking club in Connecticut.

The Latino & Puerto Rican Affairs Commission was established 14 years ago by some of your fellow members/legislators and since then it has greatly impacted the creation of legislation toward the betterment of Latinos in Connecticut. These legislations have been in the areas of education, health, immigrant's issues and youth to name a few. By providing advocacy, advice, collaborating with other agencies and research LPRAC has been able to positively influence the creation and continuation of programming to enhance the lives of Latinos in the state.

As a member of Toastmasters and Latina, I would not be here this evening if LPRAC has not agreed to support an organization that believes that peoples' lives can be enhanced by giving them the tools for leadership and by being able to voice their concerns in public. I am sure that you as legislators know the importance of that.

Latinos/Hispanic are the fastest growing population in United States, That is a well-known fact. We are also the group with the lowest level of education in Connecticut. LPRAC has been an instrument ensuring that Latinos reach a higher level of education. Let's make sure that that keeps happening. I know that we are experiencing tough, economic times and that some things have to give. People are losing their jobs; their homes and they are already making a lot of sacrifices. Please do not allow the elimination of an agency like LPRAC, when it is needed the most. Please do not silence a huge population that is in dire need of services at this moment,

Thanks!

Testimony On Behalf Of The
Connecticut Regional Office of the
Anti-Defamation League

IN OPPOSITION TO
PORTIONS OF HB 6365
AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE
30, 2011, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR

February 11, 2009

The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) was founded in 1913 with a mandate to fight the defamation of the Jewish people and secure justice and fair treatment for all. Today the ADL is one of the country's leading civil rights and human services organizations. The Connecticut Regional Office of ADL is based in Hamden and serves the entire state of Connecticut.

We submit this testimony today to express our opposition to the portions of HB 6365 that would eliminate the African-American Affairs Commission, Commission on Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs, Permanent Commission on the Status of Women, and Asian Pacific American Affairs Commission, and in support of the maintenance of those Commissions as separate entities in Connecticut's state government.

The Commissions are an invaluable resource to the community and provide an important voice representing the interests of African-Americans, Latinos, women, and Asian Pacific Americans in the state. Their role monitoring legislation, helping to develop significant policy and initiatives and holding government accountable is vital to serving the needs of their respective communities. Their existence as separate entities dedicated to this objective is of particular importance, since many of their constituents may not be in a position to retain private lobbyists or others to speak on their behalf, and they may otherwise have no presence or participation in the state's lawmaking process.

In ADL's efforts to fight hate, build hope and safeguard liberty, we work with the Commissions on a regular basis. The Commissions are key partners for ADL in our work monitoring and advocating on behalf of legislation relating to hate crimes, immigration, and discrimination, as well as in the implementation of our anti-bias and diversity educational programming. Partners like the Commissions are essential to ADL's pursuit of justice and fair treatment for all in Connecticut, and to the well-being of African-American, Latino, female, Asian Pacific American and other individuals throughout the state.

We urge you to reject the portions of HB 6365 that eliminate the African-American Affairs Commission, Commission on Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs, Permanent Commission on the Status of Women, and Asian Pacific American Affairs Commission and to maintain their important presence as separate entities in Connecticut's state government.



NEGRON Consulting

February 10, 2009

Dear Appropriations Committee Member:

The Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission ("LPRAC") has been a vital part of the Hispanic community and Connecticut for the past 14 years. It was the Legislature, in keeping with current trends of addressing the issues of a growing community, who had the foresight to establish this Commission in the first place. It is critically important the Legislature continue to recognize how vital it is for this agency to continue serving the needs of the Hispanic population in Connecticut. As a management consultant, I have worked with LPRAC and its leadership on research projects concerning Hispanics in Connecticut and have always found them to be very helpful, insightful, and professional.

The Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission has been the voice of the Hispanic community in many areas including health, education, immigrant issues and youth to just name a few. They have been instrumental in working with many partners in the community such as the Department of Education, the Department of Social Services, Department of Public Health and Administrative Services to ensure that the programming available within those organizations is readily made available to the Hispanic community statewide.

The Hispanic community has been hurting for many more years than the current harsh economic times. It would be so detrimental to eliminate an important organization that brings those major concerns to the table of those with the power and influence to be able to make the situation equitable for those under-served in the areas of employment, housing, health and education.

I encourage and request that the Appropriations Committee and, through it, the Legislature, recognize the value of LPRAC and ensure that it remains a part of the State budget. I am confident that LPRAC and its leadership can agree to cooperate and implement any and all measures required to respond to the current difficult economic environment and do its equitable part. However, to eliminate the LPRAC is simply an extreme measure without merit, forewarning or thoughtful transition plan and would be more harmful than beneficial. LPRAC is a voice for the fastest growing segment of the State's population and it is important that the group be heard and acknowledged - in other words, be ably represented by its State Representatives at this time. I know firsthand that many of you have spoken publicly on the need for increased cultural competencies at State agencies, and for the need for additional representation on State commissions and committees. This is your opportunity to "walk the talk", and as the LPRAC Chair indicated in his letter of February 9, 2009 to Governor Rell, there is a clear need to take "a more surgical and strategic approach to balancing the budget". The current position is insensitive and not strategic.

I can be reached at 203.458.1842 should you have any questions and stand ready to provide testimony if it would help their cause.

Respectfully,

Michael J. Negrón

Michael J. Negrón, Managing Director

(Note: Consultant to the Connecticut Latino Leadership Council)

CAHS

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**Testimony before the Appropriations Committee
Governor's Budget Proposal – Elimination of the Commissions
Submitted by Maggie Adair, Policy Director
Connecticut Association for Human Services
February 11, 2009**

Good evening, Senator Harp, Representative Geragosian, and members of the Appropriations Committee. I am Maggie Adair, Policy Director of the Connecticut Association for Human Services (CAHS). CAHS is a statewide nonprofit organization that works to end poverty and to engage, equip, and empower all families in Connecticut to build a secure future.

Faced with a precipitous drop in state revenue and a budget deficit in the billions, policymakers must now make difficult decisions. CAHS believes that Governor Rell and our state legislators should take the long view on budget priorities, preserving the integrity of programs and policies that support children, families, and the well-being of the state.

I am testifying in opposition to the Governor's proposal to eliminate commissions that advocate for people who are often the most vulnerable in our society. The commissions I am referring to are: Permanent Commission on the Status of Women, the Commission on Children, the African-American Affairs Commission, the Commission on Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs, and the Commission on Aging. The Commissions serve an important purpose in providing a voice for these constituencies and promoting public policy that improves the lives of women, children, elderly, and minority populations.

In the current unprecedented economic downturn, the demand for public service escalates as more and more individuals lose financial ground and struggle to make ends meet. Middle-class people are being laid off at an astonishing pace and find themselves seeking support they have never sought before. Low-wage earners are losing their jobs and do not have any financial cushion to soften the financial blow. We know that the demand for food stamps, now known as SNAP, has significantly increased in Connecticut because more and more families cannot afford to put food on the table. HUSKY enrollment is rising as well.

Connecticut's poverty rate will increase as the recession grows deeper and deeper. As more and more people are hit by the economic tsunami, the Governor's budget cuts vital services to our most vulnerable citizens. Now more than ever, we need voices to highlight the short-sightedness of cutting services when the demand is greater than ever. The Commissions provide that unique voice for each of their constituents.

Our work at CAHS focuses on family economic security. We promote policies that support families as they move along an economic continuum, from meeting basic needs, to financial education, building assets, obtaining an education and landing a good-paying job. Because of this focus, CAHS is most familiar with the work of the Commission on Children and the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women. CAHS is highly impressed with the depth and breadth of their work and the results they achieve on behalf of women and children.

I am aware that the Commission on Children will technically be heard by this Committee next week. However, it seems to make sense for CAHS to speak on behalf of the Commissions in one piece of testimony.

The Commission on Children is a diligent advocate for children and families. The Commission: develops smart, results-driven policy; brings in federal and philanthropic dollars to the state; conducts research on children's needs; and empower parents to become community leaders. It has played a role in key policies over the years in the areas of early childhood education, adoption reform, prevention, child poverty, and health.

Elaine Zimmerman, the Commission's Executive Director, has provided an effective and needed voice at the Early Childhood Cabinet and the Child Poverty and Prevention Council. We cannot lose the passion, expertise, and results that the Commission on Children provides to the state of Connecticut.

Likewise, the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women is the leading voices on issues of equity and opportunity for women. PCSW is the only state entity that evaluates laws and policies for their impact on women and their families. Women need a strong advocate as they are paid less than men, suffer from sexual harassment and discrimination, receive less health care than men, continue to serve as the core caregiver of the family, and still cannot break the glass ceiling.

PCSW has been responsible for passage of landmark legislation, including protecting pregnant workers, defining and prohibiting sexual harassment, creating the first family and medical leave protections in the country, and requiring a 48-hour hospital stay for normal childbirth.

I have remarked specifically on the Commission on Children and the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women because we have worked most closely with them. However, CAHS is just as concerned that we support advocacy voices of the other commissions. In these difficult times, we cannot suppress voices for our most vulnerable people.

A balanced budget that disproportionately hits the most vulnerable members of our society who have the least opportunity to present their interests before state government is not a budget that the people of Connecticut can be proud of. We are counting on the Appropriations Committee to work with the Finance, Revenue, and Bonding Committee and members of the House and Senate leadership to craft a budget that reflects equity as well as fiscal responsibility.