

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!