



**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](mailto:lprac@cga.ct.gov)  
Web Site: [www.cga.ct.gov/lprac](http://www.cga.ct.gov/lprac)

**Chairperson**  
*Carlos Alvarez*  
**Vice Chair**  
*Sonia P. Ayala*  
**Secretary**  
*Ivette Servera*  
**Treasurer**  
*Pablo Rivera*  
**Past Chairman**  
*Manuel Garcia*

**Commissioners:**  
*Ramón L. Arroyo*  
*Luis A. Menéndez*  
*Enriques Marciano*  
*Alcides Ortiz*  
*Juan M. Perez*  
*Ed Rodríguez*  
*Norma Rodríguez-Reyes*  
*Maritza Tirú*

**Executive Director**

**Special Projects**  
**Coordinator/Grants Writer**  
*Lucy Goicoechea-Hernández*

**Principal Legislative Analyst**  
*Werner Oyanadel*

**Legislative Analyst II**  
*Lina Lorenzi, Esq.*

**Public Information Officer**  
*Karlo Ruiz*

**Senior Legislative Secretary**  
*Clarisa Cardone*

February 18, 2009

**CONCERNING THE ELIMINATION OF FUNDING FOR  
MEDICAL INTERPRETERS SERVICES UNDER MEDICAID AS  
PROPOSED BY THE GOVERNOR'S BIENNIAL BUDGET**

Buenas tardes Senadora Harp, Representante Geragosian y miembros del Comité de Apropiaciones. Muchísimas gracias por la oportunidad de hablar con su Comité hoy. Me llamo Lina Lorenzi y soy una analista legislativa para La Comisión de Asuntos Latinos y Puertorriqueños. Deseo indicarle que nuestra Comisión está contra la propuesta de eliminar los fondos para intérpretes médicos bajo Medicaid.

Not so easy, is it?

Now imagine if you will that you are all medical doctors and are presented with this scenario. You are a doctor that has taken the Hippocratic oath, have promised to do no harm yet you do not speak Spanish and do not have a medical interpreter to assist you in treating your patient. How do you proceed? Do you use a bilingual child that has accompanied your patient? Do you wait until a bilingual staff person can be located to assist you? Or will your patient leave in frustration only to return to your emergency room weeks later in critical condition?

These are among the challenges that face the Latino community on a regular basis when seeking health care. We are talking about a population that comprises 12% of Connecticut's population according to the U.S. Census Bureau's late 2007 report. And astonishingly enough, 44% of the state's Latinos say they have trouble understanding their doctors according to Jeanette DeJesus, Executive Director of the Hispanic Health Council here in Connecticut.

Before I went to law school I worked as a social worker for Roosevelt Hospital in New York City. I was assigned to the High Risk Nursery where infants born with a range of medical issues were placed. During my five years as a social worker in this unit I was often called upon to translate for the medical staff when the baby's condition had to be conveyed to an anxious and scared mother. Can you imagine the trauma of being told in a three way conversation that your baby is



diagnosed as having Down's Syndrome, or that the doctor was not sure if your baby would live because of a major heart defect or worse yet, that the baby had died. I found these situations agonizing. As familiar as I was with medical terminology, there was the occasional medical term which with I was not familiar. I stumbled, I would try describing what was wrong with the child as the mother heard one of the most terrible things she would hear in her life.

Everyone deserves better.

We at the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission are firmly opposed to the elimination of funding for medical interpreters under Medicaid. The stakes are too high. We encourage you to look at this cut through the eyes of a doctor, a patient, and above all, as a member of the world community.

Muchas gracias y buenas noche.