



Statement of Ariel Martinez; Executive Director - New Life Corporation
Before the Appropriations Committee
December 9, 2009

Sen. Harp, Rep. Geragosian and members of the committee:

My name is Ariel Martinez. I am Executive Director of New Life Corporation a faith-based non-profit located in New Haven Connecticut. The purpose of New Life Corporation is to build the financial economic security of low-income individuals/families in the Greater New Haven region through services in workforce development, financial education, and asset-building.

I want to thank this legislative body for the opportunity to speak and comment on Governor Rell's proposed \$330 million in cuts to balance the current states budget. As you are aware, that included in her cuts is the proposed 25% funding reduction to the Hispanic Human Resource Development (HHRD) program line-item.

This fact is of grave concern to organizations such as New Life because while we provide services for all groups of people, almost 60% of our clients are Hispanic residents. Over 80% are low-income while others have no income and are searching for jobs. Over the past six years we have provided services to over 10,000 people and through our Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program have assisted them in accessing over \$21.8 million dollars in Federal income tax refunds and Earned Income Tax Credits (EITC).

We are also the only Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Certified Individual Tax Identification Number (ITIN) Acceptance Agent within 80 miles from New Haven. We assist undocumented low-income workers in processing and obtaining their ITIN number which permits them to legally file their income tax returns to the IRS. Here again, over 97% of our clients are Hispanic.

One would think that we are a larger organization, but in truth we have only five staff. The reason we are able to service such a large number of people is through the collaboration and hard work of over 75 volunteers which we recruit, train, certify and manage on a yearly bases. Hence over the past six years, we've worked with over 450 volunteers.

That said, the proposed 25% funding reduction would be difficult enough in today's economy, but when you factor in the reality of Hispanics being the largest and fastest growing population in the state of Connecticut and that the current total line-item budget for Hispanic serving agencies is currently less than an abysmal 1% imposing any kind of additional cuts is not only a dishonest representation of spending priorities, it is utterly immoral. This proposed reduction will result in a state-wide decrease of vitally needed services to the neediest of families and in some cases the total elimination of some of these Hispanic servicing organizations who are uniquely qualified to assist this population and are additionally strategically located in communities where many larger organizations are not are unable to access them.

It is for this reason that I respectfully ask that you oppose the 25% cut to the HHRD line-item currently being discussed. I want to thank you for the opportunity to express my opinion and your willingness to give serious deliberation on this topic.

Respectfully Submitted:
Ariel Martinez; Executive Director