



State of Connecticut
Latino and Puerto Rican
Affairs Commission

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LPRAC Testimony

To: Members of the Judiciary Committee
From: Werner Oyanadel, LPRAC Principal Legislative Analyst
Re: Public Hearing in Support of Raised Bill No. 6533
Date: Tuesday, March 24th, 2009 ~ 12:00 P.M. in room 2C

The LPRAC is supportive Raised Bill Number 6533, "An Act Concerning a Department of Correction Advisory Commission." This bill, if adopted, would create a commission that would review policies and practices of the State Department of Corrections that may include programming, safety, and reentry policy issues. It would look at compliance with diversity and cultural competence with respect to hiring of personnel and promotion practices. Finally, it would make the appropriate recommendations to the legislature and Governor's office accordingly. This office would be administered by the Office of Policy and Management and it would report its findings each year. The members of the commission shall receive no compensation for their services but shall be reimbursed for any necessary expenses incurred.

The LPRAC, for the record, 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 Lubbie 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 youth 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 on ways 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.

The LPRAC is currently listed in Raised Bill No. 6533 as an official member of this advisory commission and the LPRAC similarly as the work performed with the REDCJS would be honored to participate together with all the other members of this advisory commission.

The LPRAC was created by the legislature of the State of Connecticut through Public Act Number 94-152, taking effect February 1, 1995. LPRAC is part of the legislative branch and governed by section 2-120 of the Connecticut General Statutes. The LPRAC is mandated to review and comment on any proposed state legislation that would affect the Latino population in the state.