



**State of Connecticut**  
**Latino and Puerto Rican**  
**Affairs Commission**

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**Testimony of the Latino & Puerto Rican Affairs Commission**  
**Before the Appropriations Committee**

**February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2010 ~ Room 2C of the Legislative Office Bldg., Hartford, CT**  
**Concerning the Governor's Deficit Mitigation Plan**

Good afternoon State Senator Harp, State Representative Geragosian and honorable members of the Appropriations Committee. My name Werner Oyanadel, Acting Executive Director of the State of Connecticut Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission (LPRAC); I am here with Carmen Sierra, Executive Director of the Connecticut Association for United Spanish Action, Inc. (CAUSA) and we are here to speak against the Governor's Deficit Mitigation Plan and in support of the Spanish American Merchants Association (SAMA), Mi Casa Inc., the Institute for the Hispanic Family, the San Juan Center, Inc., Casa Boricua, Spanish Community of Wallingford, Norwalk Community Center, Spanish Speaking Center, Hispanic Center of Danbury, Centro de la Comunidad, Hispanic Coalition of Greater Waterbury, New Life Corporation, and Junta for Progressive Action.

We 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 these agencies 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, create more affordable housing or improve our lack of access to proper medical care and insurance coverage.

Latinos are the largest and youngest ethnic group in the United States. In Connecticut, Latinos make up 12 percent of the overall population and Latino children make up 15.5% of the overall student population in our public schools. As a matter of fact the poverty rate for Latino children under the age of 18 for whom poverty status is determined by the U.S. Census is 30 percent, the infant mortality rate is 1.6 times higher for Latino children than White non-Latino children, and the Latino population is growing 12 times faster than the general population.

Now that the State of Connecticut is facing an economic crisis unlike any witnessed in generations, the Latino community and the people of Connecticut are looking for their local social agencies, and the state government for assistance and leadership. These Latino agencies being proposed for elimination by the Governor's office represent a community that historically has been denied the resources that many other Connecticut citizens take for granted. While we agree that cuts are sorely needed in order to make the state's budget much leaner and provide for a balanced budget, we strongly believe that a more surgical and strategic approach to balancing the budget is required.

We look forward for the Appropriations Committee to recommend a budget that reflects the fiscal reality but takes into consideration the effects of such changes to our working families and agencies that serve the Latino community. Keep in mind that just a few months ago most of these agencies were hit with budget reductions higher than 50 percent and that the overall state investment on these agencies represents less than .001 percent of the overall state budget.

Thank you,