



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

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## Public Testimony

**From:** Werner Oyanadel, LPRAC Acting Executive Director  
**To:** Education Committee  
**Re:** In support of H.B. 5491  
**Date:** March 15, 2010

Senator Gaffey, Representative Fleischmann and honorable members of the Education Committee. The Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission (LPRAC) is in support of H.B. 5491 An Act Concerning Certain School District Reforms to Reduce the Achievement Gap in Connecticut.

This legislative proposal expands the tools that allow schools and communities to develop excellence in the least restrictive approach. Key bill concepts include: Linking teacher and principal evaluations to student achievement; piloting a tax-break program for teachers who are willing to work longer hours (extended day and Saturday academies); a "parent trigger" that allows parents with 51% signatures to petition to district and state to reconstitute a school (potentially as a charter school); expansion of online course offerings for High School students to prevent drop-out due to courses being unavailable in time for graduation; and expansion of AP courses for students (higher standards for all).

This comprehensive bill seeks to cluster together several small reforms that will collectively have the potential to impact how school districts do business. It seeks to incentivize districts to adopt the reforms that are proven to work in improving student outcomes (i.e., increased instructional time, high expectations, effective teachers and principals, better communication between parents and teachers, parents empowered to create school change, and expanded online course options for high school students as a one way of preventing dropouts).

For the record, Connecticut's total population according to the latest Census information is 3,494,851 out of which 391,405 are of Latino descent. Of the 827,101 children under the age of 18 living in Connecticut, 130,366 are of Latino/Hispanic descent and they make up 15.5% of the overall student population in Connecticut public schools. Meanwhile, the infant mortality rate in Connecticut was 1.6 times higher for Latino/Hispanic children than white non-Hispanic children and the poverty rate for Latino children under the age of 18 for whom poverty status is determined by the U.S. Census is 30%.

On behalf of the LPRAC we urge the Education Committee to vote in favor of this bill.

**Note:** The LPRAC is an active partner of Campaign Learn – a grassroots mobilization effort to promote leadership and accountability in ensuring that all Connecticut children have access to high-quality educational options.