



Statement of Elizabeth Garcia Gonzalez
before the appropriations Committee
March 4, 2011

To the Honorable Harp, Walker and members of the committee:

My name is Elizabeth García González, and I'm Executive Director of Centro de la Comunidad, New London, CT. Centro de la Comunidad is the only Latino community based non profit agency that serves individuals and families in New London County.

The mission of Centro de la Comunidad is to promote the empowerment of Hispanics and cultivate active participation by all members in our multicultural community.

Centro de la Comunidad has offered social services to the Hispanic community and other newcomers since 1969. We provide services that help to increase opportunities for Hispanic individuals to improve their education, working towards creating a stronger community by encouraging greater participation of all Hispanics. Centro has helped thousands of individuals improve their education, find jobs, be involved in the community so that they in turn can contribute in helping others. The Hispanic population of New London County has increased by 56% between 1990 and 2000, from 8,445 to 13,236 residents. Our clients are diverse and come from various countries including Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay, Mexico, El Salvador, Costa Rica and Guatemala. The services Centro de la Comunidad provides are G.E.D. in Spanish and ESOL, English as a second language classes, Certified Nurse's Assistants, After school tutorial program, computer classes and many more.

Cultural sensitivity and outreach have been constant priorities for Centro. Centro's bilingual and bicultural staff is familiar with the surrounding community and its resources. Our services address the short term and long term needs of our clients who face a variety of challenges. The target population is socially and economically disadvantaged Latino families. The goals of the program is to ensure that Basic needs are met (food, shelter including housing assistance, clothing, medical and social services), Participants have access to special needs programs through referrals including mental health care, counseling services, immigration, legal assistance and a variety of special or basic needs that affect every individual.

Our agency has been very instrumental in preparing the Latino community. We have many success stories of our clients that show how the agency has helped them become product citizens of this state. Many of our clients are working in private companies, are interpreters for community health services, are completing their bachelor's degree, etc. With the limited funding that we get from DSS-HHD/HRD line item, we have been influential in meeting DSS's mission.

The elimination of Hispanic funding will be a detrimental not only to our community, but to the state as well. The Latino Community of New London strongly recommends to keep the HHD/HRD line-item on the budget and to continue working with us as productive partners. Thank you for your time.