



Statement of Maria Campos-Harlow
Spanish Community of Wallingford
Appropriation Committee
March 5, 2011

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

My name is Maria Campos-Harlow, and I am the Executive Director of the Spanish Community of Wallingford.

The Spanish Community of Wallingford (Comunidad Hispana de Wallingford), a non-profit agency providing social services to the Latino community for 39 years, is asking you to resist cutting the financial assistance that the State provides to us. Because of your support, we are able to provide critical help to a special group of residents anxious to participate in the American dream but facing a language barrier that makes achieving that goal difficult.

The goal of our agency is to provide the temporary assistance that they need in their journey to fully participate in and become productive members of the greater American society. That assistance takes many forms. First and foremost, we encourage our clients to become proficient in the English language through ESL classes that we either provide directly or introduce them to places that are conducted elsewhere in Wallingford.

While our clients are in the process of learning a new language, they require the same services everyone else does, including medical care, employment assistance, legal assistance, housing, education, after school programs and all the other services we all access. Those services, to be effective for the Latino community must have the expertise in language and in culture, because the language barrier is not just a communications barrier but a cultural, economic and educational barrier as well.

Without your financial assistance and our services, it would much more challenging for the Latino community to break down the walls that separate them from the rest of the society.

Furthermore, our organization represents an important economic contribution to our community. We employ two full time and three part time employees and we also contract services of professionals such as consultants, program instructors, accountants and more.

It is also relevant to point out our ability to stretch the grant monies that we receive. By carefully selecting excellent services and goods for the best prices, engaging valuable volunteers and collaborating with other organizations, we manage to offer a wide range of services and programs that are contributing to build a healthier and more productive community.

Please allow this agency to continue this vital work. We are the ones providing the network that every previous immigrant group needed in their journey to full participation in American society. The large factories and ethnic service clubs that provided the framework of assistance to prior waves of immigrants are largely gone. In today's America, agencies such as ours are filling that void, but we can do so only with your help.

I would like to close my portion of our testimony by thanking you for the generous financial support you have given us for many years. I promise you that it has been money carefully and effectively spent making lives better. We hope you are as proud of what you have accomplished by allowing us these resources, as we are in having helped so many achieve their dreams of being part of the United States of America and the State of Connecticut. Thank you.

If you have any questions, please call me (203) 265-5866.