

Testimony of the Honorable Migdalia Castro in opposition to merging the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission into the New Commission on Citizen Advocacy - HB 6354 "Implementing the Governor's Budget Recommendations Concerning General Government." - Friday, March 22, 2013 at 10:00 A.M. in Room 2C of the LOB in Hartford, CT.

Honorable Senators and Representatives of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Migdalia Castro, Alderwoman for the City of New Haven. I am here today to oppose the language within H.B. 6354 "Implementing the Governor's Budget Recommendations Concerning General Government," which would consolidate the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission (LPRAC), the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women, the Commission on Children, the African-American Affairs Commission, the Asian Pacific American Affairs Commission, and eliminate the Commission on Aging into a new agency within the legislative branch to be called the Commission on Citizen Advocacy as a way of reducing the current state budget deficit..

The Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission was established by Public Act 94-152 of the Connecticut General Assembly back in 1994. The agency is on its way to celebrating 20 years of existence next year. The savings realized with this merger is so miniscule that it would probably cost far more in employee time to re-organize them all under one stand-alone commission than it is to allow them to continue to provide:

- Public policy guidance on behalf of the populations they serve-in this case, the Hispanic community of Connecticut which has almost doubled since the 2000 census was taken;
- Access to research that can help draft legislation;
- Access to experts in the respective fields the legislature may be looking at to helm major state departments or judicial appointments;
- Continue to bring-in added revenues through access to private sector grant funding;
- Creatively come up with means of increasing the state's revenue streams as it is currently doing by having the legislature consider allowing immigrants to obtain driver's licenses and registration-raising a potential additional \$3 million for state coffers;
- Helping to reduce the educational gap by raising (thus far since 2005) over \$140,000 in grant dollars towards scholarships for Hispanic youth to obtain higher education;
- Serve as an informational resource for the legislature on the socio-economic condition of the Latino community.
- Teach those who wanted to learn about money literacy how best to budget, invest, track and maintain their finances;
- Assist in identifying discrimination in the workplace where one major company in Hartford was served with a class action lawsuit for discriminating against at least 22 Hispanic employees by firing them for speaking Spanish on the job;
- Establishing a public information campaign to inform the Puerto Rican community about a change in legislation in Puerto Rico that invalidated all Puerto Rican birth certificates for anyone born on the Island;
- Studying and recognizing that we needed to be at the table in the two times that the state has considered redistricting electoral boundaries state-wide;
- Helping to bring the US Department of Justice to Connecticut when Hispanic business owners in East Haven were being harassed by its Police Department; &
- Helping pass legislation on issues such as In-State Tuition for Latino Immigrant Students and more recently helping amend the Alvin W. Penn Anti-Racial Profiling Law.

I urge, therefore, the Appropriations Committee to continue to support the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission as a stand-alone agency as it works to inform you as you do your work at the Legislature on behalf of this great State of Connecticut.

Testimony of Norma Rodriguez-Reyes in opposition to merging the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission into the New Commission on Citizen Advocacy - HB 6354 "Implementing the Governor's Budget Recommendations Concerning General Government." - Friday, March 22, 2013 at 10:00 A.M. in Room 2C of the LOB in Hartford, CT.

Honorable Senators and Representatives of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Norma Rodriguez-Reyes the owner of La Voz Hispana Newspaper and from the City of New Haven. I am here today to oppose the language within H.B. 6354 "Implementing the Governor's Budget Recommendations Concerning General Government," which would consolidate the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission (LPRAC), the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women, the Commission on Children, the African-American Affairs Commission, the Asian Pacific American Affairs Commission, and eliminate the Commission on Aging into a new agency within the legislative branch to be called the Commission on Citizen Advocacy as a way of reducing the current state budget deficit..

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Testimony of Eugene Salorio in opposition to merging the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission into the New Commission on Citizen Advocacy - HB 6354 "Implementing the Governor's Budget Recommendations Concerning General Government." - Friday, March 22, 2013 at 10:00 A.M. in Room 2C of the LOB in Hartford, CT.

Good morning. Thank you for this opportunity to address you. My name is Eugene Meilán Salorio. I am a member (commissioner) of the Connecticut Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission (LPRAC) and a professor in the School of Business at the University of Connecticut.

I come here today to urge you to retain LPRAC, and indeed all the CT State Legislative Commissions, as independent entities. Each commission focuses on a different population group, just as each of you is elected to represent a particular legislative district. The commissions address enormous problems – economic disparities, public health concerns, human trafficking, public health and safety, child welfare – that affect each population group differently. When our interests and concerns overlap we work together. But specialization is what allows each commission to develop the knowledge and relationships necessary for being effective, just as each of you specializes in serving on particular legislative committees and issues.

Consolidating the commissions into one new mega-commission will put an end to this while saving very little money. If you do that, you might just as well finish the deed and eliminate all the commissions because a mega-commission will be pulled in too many different directions to ever be effective in any one of them.

LPRAC's mandate is to advise the Legislature. That is what we seek to do. Other testimony has already (or shortly will) provide specifics on the many programs LPRAC has run over the past few years: Results Based Accountability sessions, socio-economic surveys, Legislative forums, public hearings and information campaigns. We seek to work with and take input from the broadest range of concerned residents – from experts on everything ranging from asthma and the prison and probation system to parents and teachers concerned about the establishment of a gun range next to an elementary school, from undocumented workers concerned about interactions with local police forces to those local police officers who face the challenge of providing public safety and order in neighborhoods where interaction not always is easy. Our first concern is to take this input and channel it usefully to legislature, sometimes simply as data and information, other times as programmatic recommendations or legislative suggestions. Where it's possible, we also work directly with the affected parties to find solutions and to give voice to those whose words often go unheard. But the legislative mandate is always our priority.

LPRAC is a small commission, we operate with only three staff and limited budget. We commissioners are all volunteers, we receive no financial rewards. We serve because we care about our communities and because we believe in public service, our compensation is making a difference for society. LPRAC obviously can't solve all the problems of the Latino community, no more than any government can solve all the problems of society. As is true in every dimension of life, communities and individuals have to do most of it themselves. But we can help. That's what government at its best and most effective can do: create the right conditions to help people and help communities help themselves. LPRAC and all the legislative commissions are a tremendous and highly cost-effective part of this process. Please retain the independent commissions and give us the means and vehicle to continue our work.

Thank you again for providing this opportunity to speak and for your consideration.

Testimony of Cynthia Calderon in opposition to merging the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission into the New Commission on Citizen Advocacy - HB 6354 "Implementing the Governor's Budget Recommendations Concerning General Government." - Friday, March 22, 2013 at 10:00 A.M. in Room 2C of the LOB in Hartford, CT.

Honorable Senators and Representatives of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Cynthia Calderon from the City of Bridgeport, Connecticut. I am here today to oppose the language within H.B. 6354 "Implementing the Governor's Budget Recommendations Concerning General Government," which would consolidate the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission (LPRAC), the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women, the Commission on Children, the African-American Affairs Commission, the Asian Pacific American Affairs Commission, and eliminate the Commission on Aging into a new agency within the legislative branch to be called the Commission on Citizen Advocacy as a way of reducing the current state budget deficit.

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