



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

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**Testimony of LPRAC in opposition to Section 11 of HB 6350 "An Act Concerning the Budget for the Biennium ending June 30 2015 and other provisions relating to revenue." - Tuesday, February 19, 2013, 11:00 am -11:30 am at the Legislative Office Building Room 2D, Hartford, CT.**

Good morning Senator Bye, State Representative Lesser, and members of the Legislative Subcommittee of Appropriations. My name is Isaias T. Diaz, Esq., Chair of the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission (LPRAC). I am here today to discuss the Governor's budget recommendations for our legislative agency for FY 2014 – FY 2015. LPRAC opposes Section 11 of HB 6350 "An Act Concerning the Budget for the Biennium ending June 30 2015 and other provisions relating to revenue."

**Background**

On Thursday, July 13, 1972 Governor Meskill signed Executive Order Number Fourteen creating the Governor's Council on Opportunities for the Spanish Speaking; in December, 1975 Governor Grasso also signed executive order Twelve, which created the Council on Opportunities for the Spanish Speaking; and Governor Weicker, Jr. signed Executive Order No. 10 creating the Council for Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs as part of the executive branch of government. In creating these councils, all the aforementioned leaders recognized (1) the benefit from a deliberate effort to ensure economic, political, social, and legal equality for the Latino communities in Connecticut; (2) that the state's political system depended upon the active participation of this population; and (3) the need to seek greater access to and advice from individual experts on these issues for the benefit of all Connecticut residents – Such was the interest in having a stand-alone Council for Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs that in 1994 the Connecticut General Assembly decided to adopt Public Act 94-152 creating the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission within the Legislative branch of government. Public Act 94-152 was signed by the Governor on May 26, 1994 and LPRAC started to function shortly thereafter.

The statute of the Commission has been amended twice thereafter with the passage of Public Act 03-229 and once again during a Special Session in 2007 with the passage of P.A. 09-07. Under Public Act 09-07 all legislative commissions, including LPRAC took part of a governmental restructuring effort which (1) revised the commission's duties and made them uniform with respect to their target population; (2) the act increased to 21 the number of voting members on each commission; & (3) the act also allowed the appointment to the Commissions of volunteers that have experience with their target population as advocates, academics, civic or cultural leaders. These previously mentioned changes also included

significant savings to the state that totaled more than 53% in budgetary reductions to all Legislative Commissions. LPRAC, for the record, as part of the latest reform of its legislative statute is a nonpartisan policy agency which consists of 21 appointed volunteers who are mandated by law to advise the Connecticut General Assembly and the Governor on policies that shall foster progress in the Puerto Rican and Latino communities residing in Connecticut.

Furthermore LPRAC, more specifically, is responsible for the coordination of resources to the Latino and Puerto Rican population in Connecticut by developing policies in areas of health, safety, educational success, economic, self-sufficiency and discrimination. This is accomplished by submitting testimony, advising state leaders about the administration of state programs, gathering and maintaining current socio-economic information and conducting research via Results Based Accountability (RBA) theory. LPRAC is also responsible for conducting educational and outreach activities intended to raise awareness of critical issues for the Latino and Puerto Rican population of the state among other tasks.

#### **LPRAC statement regarding section 11 of HB 6350**

In specific the Governor's Bill No. 6350 would order the Office of Legislative Management to eliminate the Commission on Aging and to consolidate the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women, the Commission on Children, Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission, the African-American Affairs Commission, and the Asian Pacific American Affairs Commission into a new agency within the legislative branch to be called the Commission on Citizen Advocacy. This will reduce the legislative branch expenditures by \$788,236 for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2014, and \$874,820 for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2015 – Savings of approximately 1.6 million dollars over the course of two years of which constitutes 0.005% of the overall budget.

First, LPRAC would respectfully point out for the record that the Governor's recommended title of this new "Citizen" Advocacy agency runs afoul to many tax paying Latino legal residents that are part of our Connecticut community and are in the country lawfully, but are not yet Citizens. It also sends the wrong message to our ever increasing community that says that the Governor and the Connecticut General Assembly, if it approves his recommendation, are not really committed to diversity as it has been recognized by so many other governmental leaders in the past – Political leaders that have historically clearly recognized the urgency to have a stand-alone agency to effectively investigate problems faced by our community, conduct research and work with the legislature in developing well researched and implementable recommendations for legislation to help alleviate such problems in a systemic way.

It is also equally important to point out that LPRAC; has in many instances taken on issues that would have otherwise cost the government significant amounts of time and resources. For example, there are-statewide- Puerto Ricans born in Puerto Rico



in virtually every town of the state and as a result of the Puerto Rican government passing a law that invalidated all Puerto Rican birth certificates issued prior to July 1, 2010 the United States Department of State does not accept Puerto Rican birth certificates issued prior to July 1, 2010 as a primary proof of citizenship for a U.S. passport. All state agencies in Connecticut also did not accept this document for any official state business. LPRAC, as a result of this change met with legislative leaders and the Governor's Office to advise them about the implications of this change, rolled out a comprehensive outreach plan at no cost to the state to inform state agencies of the situation, and provided information both in English and Spanish to people affected by this law. Nearly two and a half years after we started this project LPRAC continues helping people and receiving calls on this issue almost every day. As many of you know, "Infoline" provided by United Way is Connecticut's most comprehensive phone-based service that provides information and referrals to community services in our state and every time they get a request for information on this subject they referred callers to our agency rather than individual legislators.

Over the past two years LPRAC has also released socio-economic research to fill gaps in the state's own data collection efforts, and conducted legislative forums in Results Based Accountability (RBA) format for the purpose of advising policymakers on mandated issues such as education, public safety, discrimination, self-sufficiency, and public health. In addition, we have also conducted fundraising efforts that have resulted in \$140,000.00 in privately-funded scholarships for Latino students, and supported efforts to increase civic engagement and participation in the electoral and governmental process.

Furthermore, LPRAC, after receiving countless complaints of police brutality, helped initiate a probe by the U.S. Justice Department to investigate acts of racial profiling taking place in the Town of East Haven. This investigation led to the arrest of four East Haven police officers approximately two years later. It was our initial efforts that curtailed future acts of racial profiling and also led to a restructuring of police procedure by the East Haven Police Department. Many of the interviews performed by the U.S. Justice Department took place at our office after LPRAC requested that the Justice Department investigate serious allegations of civil rights abuses that we were receiving at our office in Hartford. More recently two of the four police officers arrested have pleaded guilty and the federal government has reached a settlement with the town which has agreed to reforms aimed at protecting its residents' civil rights. Two of the officers are expected to go to trial soon, facing a 10-count indictment which was handed up by a federal grand jury in Bridgeport. A LPRAC delegation also met with the East Haven Mayor Joseph Maturo days after he replied to the media when asked about the police arrests "What are you going to do for the Latino community today?" and Maturo responded: "I might have tacos



when I go home, I'm not quite sure yet." Shortly thereafter, LPRAC, in conjunction with several other agencies and lawmakers, successfully urged the legislature to amend the Alvin W. Penn Racial profiling law to provide greater safeguards against racial profiling and to more adequately enforce data collection policies required by the initial legislation.

LPRAC has been making efforts to alleviate the minor fiscal draw the commission brings to state government. Following efforts initially made successful by the Commission on Children, LPRAC has also spent sufficient time and effort into methods for creating a state revenue stream through its policy making efforts to ensure that the future of this commission, and the services we provide to an ever increasing community remain unthreatened and uninhibited by fiscal crises.

Our first idea since the budget problems which plagued this commission's existence, which was the fruit of several meetings and fact finding hearings, will be brought to the forefront of the legislature this year. LPRAC, with the support of State Representative Juan Candelaria, Deputy Majority Leader and Chairman of the Black and Puerto Rican Caucus recommend legislation which could potentially yield approximately three million dollars in annual fees to our state coffers for a new program that would allow many undocumented immigrants in Connecticut to obtain a valid driver's license. Connecticut immigrants are currently driving without licenses due in large part to their immigration status and inability to apply for licenses. The collateral effect of said restrictions forces immigrants to drive unlicensed and uninsured so they can work and support their families. This forces many Latino immigrants to risk major financial loss to themselves and the community at large and if continued, could result in higher insurance premiums for everyone. Implementing the legislation we aided in developing would alleviate said public safety concerns all the while creating state revenue through licensing, automobile registrations, and emissions testing and the private sector through automobile purchases, driver's education courses enrollments and acquisition of insurance coverage for automobiles they would and do operate.

### **Fiscal Impact**

The fiscal impact of HB 6350 will result in an immediate staff reduction of eight staff positions from 26 staff positions available among all legislative commissions creating a savings of 1.6 million. However, it will certainly not materially help close the overall budget deficit affecting Connecticut. Policymakers will be less informed about crucial issues dealing with racism, xenophobia, and intolerance at a critical time when Connecticut is facing a significant population growth in the Latino population, which already reached half a million people or almost 14% of the overall population<sup>1</sup>. Moreover, this significant population growth will impact both



the size and complexity of the demand for a significant amount of services required for this segment of Connecticut's population and will ultimately offset and eradicate the initial savings from the commission mergers.

We, at LPRAC, understand the need to control state expenditures but the Governor's proposal seriously undermines the original intent of the legislative branch when it created these commissions as separate, independent non-partisan agencies in order for each to most effectively inform state policymakers about the status, conditions and contributions of very different underserved populations. All five legislative commissions serve very different populations with limited overlap in some areas but the new agency, as suggested by the Governor, would not only disband these legislative commissions but potentially exclude the voices of the groups serviced by the individual commissions. Vision and mission are pivotal to the success of any agency, business, organization, etc. It is ideologically impossible for one commission to address all of the unique and highly specialized needs being met by the current legislative set-up. Who will this one commission serve? Women? Children? Latinos? African Americans? Asians? How will it define its purpose when the existing commissions are already strapped and are performing these enormous tasks with limited resources? What happens to the groups who are no longer a priority of the new commission through the shear result of impossibility?

The Secretary of the State's Office had recently announced that improvements in representation of minorities and women on state boards and commissions had been observed on her latest State's Biennial Report on the Gender and Racial Composition of Connecticut State Boards and Commissions. However, the report also showed significant disparities between the percentage of minorities and women serving on boards and commissions and their population figures shown in the latest U.S. Census report for Connecticut. It is unclear to us from the Governor's proposal what would happen to all the legislative appointments set forth in state statute from these underserved populations but it is clear to us that if LPRAC was eliminated and consolidated into another form of agency the current overall diversity of Latino/Hispanic appointees would decrease from 3.7% to almost 1%. A step backward in all the gains attained by our legislative leaders that have worked so diligently the last decade making sure our governing bodies more accurately represent the face of the state.

### **Conclusion**

LPRAC, therefore, remains determined to be an active partner with the Connecticut General Assembly and the Governor's Office as you discuss Connecticut's budget priorities for the next biennium. However, the current budget recommendations set forth by HB 6350 do not currently reflect the values and priorities of a state that



respects equality and diversity. We just hope that the Appropriations Committee rejects the Governor's proposal under section 11 of HB 6350 as penny wise and pound foolish type of policy as we at LPRAC passionately believe that the Connecticut General Assembly cannot afford not receiving information from independent sources outside the executive branch.

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<sup>i</sup> From 2000 to 2010, the Latino population in Connecticut increased by 49.6% and accounted for 94.2% of the state's total population growth. In 2010, Connecticut's Latino population totaled 479,087 and constituted 13.4% of the state's total population. Much of the Latino population was concentrated in Bridgeport, Hartford, New Haven, and Waterbury. The counties with the largest Latino population were Fairfield, Hartford, New Haven, and New London. – U.S. Hispanic Latino Institute –The Almanac of Latino Politics 2012. Hispanics at the national level are the fastest-growing segment of the U.S. population, at 16%, a proportion expected to grow to 30% over the next four decades. Hispanics/Latinos are an economic force with an estimated buying power of \$1.2 trillion in 2012 according to the Selig Center's annual Multicultural Economy report.



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December 30, 2012

The Honorable Toni N. Harp & Toni Walker  
Co-Chairs of the Joint Committee on Appropriations  
Legislative Office Building  
300 Capitol Avenue  
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Senator Harp & State Representative Walker:

I am delighted to submit the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission's (LPRAC) 2012 Report Card/Annual Report as guided by Results Based Accountability (RBA) guidelines and mandated by Section 2-120 and Section 11-4a of the Connecticut General Statutes (CGS).

I am also submitting a copy of our 2012 Latino Socio-Economic Status Report to be in compliance with letter (c) number (5) of Section 2-120 of the CGS. This data is already available to legislators and other interested parties upon request.

If you have any questions regarding this correspondence, please do not hesitate to contact me at (860) 240-0097 or via email at [werner.oyanadel@cga.ct.gov](mailto:werner.oyanadel@cga.ct.gov).

Sincerely,

*Werner Oyanadel*

Werner Oyanadel  
Acting Executive Director

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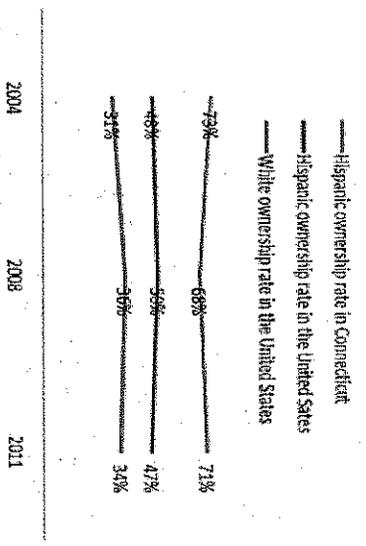
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# 2012 Latino & Puerto Rican Affairs Commission Report on Quality Affordable Housing.

## All Connecticut Latinos Have Access to Quality Affordable Housing

Partners: CT Attorney General's Office, CT Housing Finance Authority, Connecticut Children's Medical Center, Department of Public Health, CT Commission on Health Equity, CT Association of REALTORS, CT Fair Housing Center, CT Coalition to End Homelessness, CT Aids Resource Center, CT Judicial Branch, CT Housing Coalition, First Niagara Bank, Partnership for Strong Communities and South Eastern CT Housing Association (SECHA).

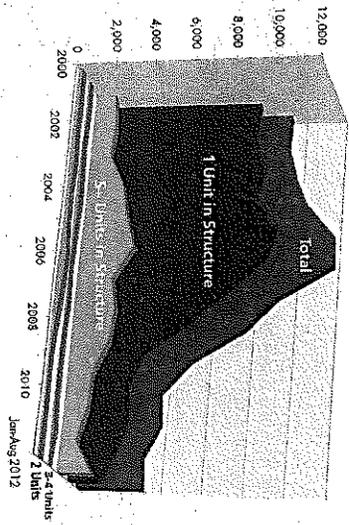
### Hispanic Homeownership Rates



#### Story behind the baseline:

The agency identified a series of factors that are driving the inability of the Hispanic community to achieve quality affordable housing & these include the high cost of housing in CT, lack of quality affordable housing and lower income levels within the community.

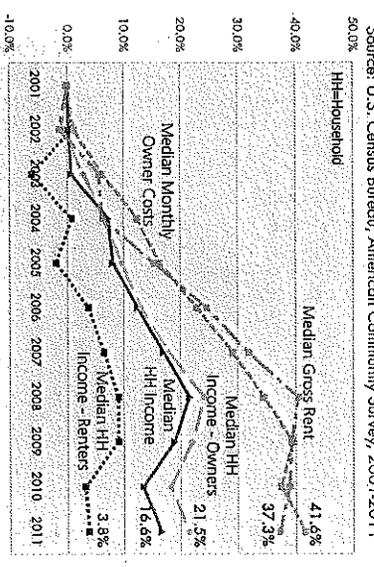
Building Permits Issued in Connecticut by Number of Units in Structure, 2000-2012  
Source: U.S. Census Bureau



#### Story behind the baseline:

This chart reflects Connecticut's anemic housing production levels from 2000-2012, however 2012 has seen a slight increase in this trend. Chart courtesy of Partnership for Strong Communities.

Change in Median Household Income and Housing Prices from 2001-2011  
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2001-2011



#### Story behind the baseline:

The Partnership for Strong Communities also indicated that only 29 of CT's 169 cities & towns that have over 10% of their housing stock considered affordable in 2011. This is yet another barrier for the Hispanic community to overcome in addition to the issues of affordability, lower income ratios and availability.

### Proposed Actions to Turn the Curve:

The Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission (LPRAC) will work to prioritize the following tasks leading to achieving the goal of identifying strategies that can ameliorate the issues facing us under the following areas of concern: financial-construction trust; educational programming-educating resident homebuyers and informing community about services available to them; gather data on health of children and adults living in sub-standard conditions that cause asthma and other disease then work with hospitals to reduce re-hospitalizations; Connecticut's income disparity-address minimum wage issue as in CT 51% of jobs do not pay enough to rent a 2 bedroom apartment; inclusion of young people; bringing them into the conversation. Next steps would be to invite partners who were missing at the conversation to continue the dialogue towards creation of a strategy to help us and our partners realize outcomes in the 10 key areas identified by the group on November 15, 2012 once the report is provided to each of the participants present and potentially those that we would invite to follow up conversations as we build the strategy that will begin to turn the curve.



# Latino & Puerto Rican Affairs Commission Report on the Status of Latinos.

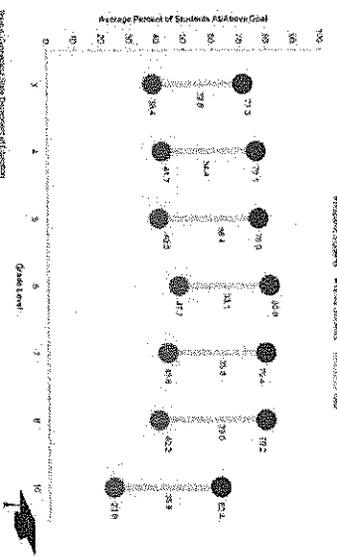
## Result 1: All Latinos Achieve Educational Success

Partners: State Department of Education, CONNCAN, State Education Resource Center (SERC), African American Affairs Commission, Asian Pacific American Affairs Commission, Wesleyan University, West Hartford Public Schools, Mayor Drew, City of Middletown, State Birth to Three Program, New Britain Discovery Center, English Language Learners Task Force.

### Story behind the baseline:

The chart below reflects the gap between White and Latino students on the CMT and CAPT test for 2011.

Latino/White Achievement Gap  
2011 CMT and CAPT



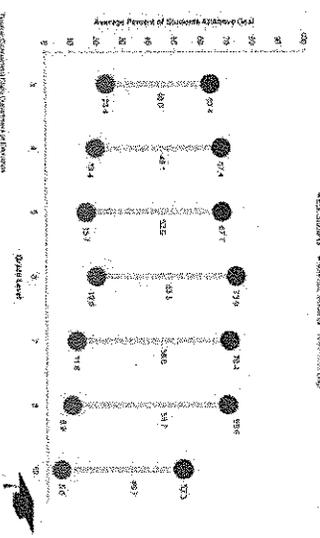
### Proposed actions to turn the curve:

The agency identified a series of factors that are significantly contributing to the low achievement gap within the Hispanic community. Factors such as lack of participation in early childhood education, high poverty rates, having to choose between staying in school and working to help support the family, little identification of role models among the teaching staff for youth, language barriers, and lack of parental participation in children's education are a few of them.

### Story behind the baseline:

The chart below demonstrates the gap between English Language and non-English language learners as reflected on the 2011 CMT and CAPT tests.

English Language Learner Achievement Gap  
2011 CMT and CAPT



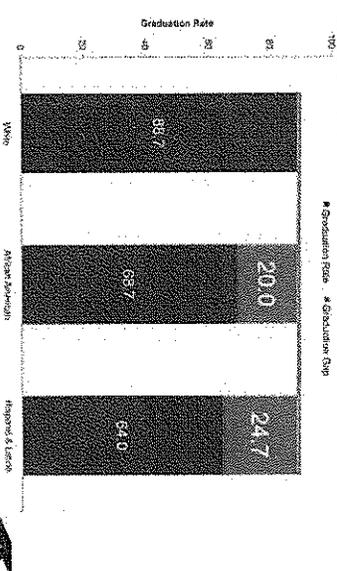
### Proposed actions to turn the curve:

The agency and its partners have identified a number of ways that Hispanic youth are impacted and therefore are unable to realize parity in educational attainment. The agency and its partners have committed to working on at least 3 of the major factors contributing to the continued decline in educational attainment for this growing state population. These are: 1) identifying programs that have been successful in other school systems to achieve parental participation in their children's education; 2) implementing programs that are tried and true; 3) restructuring the curriculum to allow students to go to school and work if they need to.

### Story behind the baseline:

Connecticut's High School Graduation Gap for the class of 2010 among White, Hispanic and African American students.

Connecticut's High School Graduation Gap,  
Class of 2010



### Proposed actions to turn the curve:

Although the state of Connecticut has increased the amount of funding to help reduce the educational gap, it remained flat none the less. More needs to be done to begin reducing the identified factors that prevent Hispanic youth from achieving higher educational attainment and closing the current educational gap.