



State of Connecticut
Latino and Puerto Rican
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Testimony of Werner Oyanadel Before the Appropriations Committee regarding H.B. No. 6350 "An Act Concerning the Budget for the Biennium ending June 2015" Friday, February 22, 2013 5:00 P.M. LOB Room 2C – Hartford, CT

Good evening Senator Harp, Representative Toni Walker and all the members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Werner Oyanadel, Acting Executive Director of the Latino & Puerto Rican Affairs Commission (LPRAC). I am here to raise some concerns about the Governor's proposal H.B. 6350 "An Act Concerning the Budget for the Biennium ending June 2015," on behalf of a broad range of non-profit Latino agencies which provide services to the state's most vulnerable populations. Those agencies are:

- Junta Progressive Action, Inc. - New Haven
- Spanish Speaking Center -New Britain
- Brighter Future Youth Center -Hartford
- Hispanic Center of Greater Danbury
- San Juan Center - Hartford
- Spanish Community of Wallingford
- Centro de la Comunidad -New London
- Casa Boricua- Meriden
- Hispanic Coalition of Greater Waterbury
- New Life Corporation - New Haven
- South Norwalk Community Center -Norwalk
- Centro de la Comunidad in Norwich
- Connecticut Association for United Spanish Action (CAUSA, Inc.)- Hartford

This bill before you today proposes a consolidation aimed at streamlining agency account structures which among other things would merge emergency assistance, food stamp training expenses, healthy start, services to persons with disabilities, Hispanic human development programs, services to the elderly, safety net services, housing/homeless services, domestic violence shelters, human services infrastructure community action, and teen pregnancy prevention programs under an existing account within the State Department of Social Services' budget entitled "Community Services Account."

All the non-profit agencies here today will be disproportionately affected with the elimination of the Hispanic development programs line item along with a \$42,000 dollar reduction being proposed in addition to an almost 30% reduction in the last biennium budget which will force these agencies to continue cutting services to the most vulnerable populations and many of them will be forced to close their agency.

We strongly recommend that the line item under the human development programs stay as a stand-alone line item under the DSS budget as it has been the case at least for the last two decades. The historical reason for the legislature to have such a designation is the recognition of the need to provide the culturally and linguistically appropriate services and in that process the state has saved moneys because this community based organizations have the capacity to provide such programs.

These agencies throughout the State located on the poorest neighborhoods in urban centers struggle every day with finding innovate ways of using scarce resources with an ever-increasing demand for these services. The State and the country have experienced the largest recession in recorded history. As a result we have seen a dramatic increase in the unemployment rate and a reduction of salaries for middle and low income families, among the underserved populations the rates often are closer to double what the standard average is for the rest of the state. The effect of these cuts can be measured in all types of services from health, to education and employment. The higher gas, food and housing prices complicate this picture.

Therefore, we respectfully urge the Appropriations Committee to:

1. Maintain intact the line item for Hispanic Human Development;
2. Provide full funding to these agencies which cannot endure additional cuts;
3. Most importantly reallocate additional funding from the overall social services department to reflect the significant increase in demand within the population serviced by this HHD/HRD accounts.

Thank you for listening to our perspective regarding this important matter affecting the Latino community in Connecticut and we would be happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.