



State of Connecticut
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Testimony of Werner Oyanadel, Executive Director of LPRAC

IN SUPPORT OF RAISED S.B. NO 18

“An Act Concerning the English Language Learner Educator Incentive Program”

Higher Education & Employment Advancement Committee

February 24, 2014

Sen. Cassano, Rep. Willis and members of the Higher Education & Employment Committee. I am here today to speak in support of the proposed changes discussed in Raised S.B. No. 18 **“An Act Concerning the English Language Learner Educator Incentive Program.”** My name is Werner Oyanadel, Executive Director of the Connecticut General Assembly’s Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission (LPRAC).

The bill before you, if adopted by the Connecticut General Assembly (CGA), would fully redesign the current English language learner educator loan reimbursement program adopted in CT in 2012. For the record, this loan reimbursement program was part of several other recommendations provided to the CGA by a legislative task force regarding English Language Learners co-chaired by Sen. Ayala and Rep. Johnson in 2012. Under the original act, recipients of federal or state education loans who met the program's criteria were qualified to receive reimbursements of up to \$5,000 per year for a maximum of five years for up to 20 educators. To be eligible for the program a person must graduate from an in-state teacher preparation program and complete the state's teaching certification requirements or hold a teaching certificate and complete an in-state program to obtain an endorsement in bilingual education or teaching English to speakers of other languages; be employed at a Connecticut public school in a teaching position that requires such an endorsement; and make a written commitment to remain employed for at least five years after receiving the endorsement. The act also required the Office of Financial and Academic Affairs for Higher Education (OFAAHE) to administer the program and allowed the office to adopt regulations for this purpose.

The new revamped English Language learner educator incentive program would be administered by the Office of Higher Education and within available appropriations provide a grant to any student who is in the last two years of a teacher preparation program leading to a professional certification at any four-year institution of higher education in this state, and will pursue an endorsement in bilingual education or teaching English to speakers of other languages. SB 18 also stipulates that no student shall receive a grant under such program for more than two years and delineates that the maximum grants shall not exceed five thousand dollars per year.

Moreover, a student who receives a grant under this program and who teaches bilingual education or teaches English to speakers of other languages in a public



school in this state upon graduation from the teacher education program shall be eligible for reimbursement of federal or state educational loans up to a maximum of two thousand five hundred dollars per year for up to four years of teaching service.

The previously described changes to this program are supported by LPRAC particularly after our agency received testimony at a public hearing our agency hosted on issues related to bilingual education on January 29, 2014 – recommendations, which among others, included testimony that stipulated that there is a bilingual certified educator shortage in our state. Therefore, we at LPRAC believe that the redesigned program to allow for grants and loan reimbursement for a larger pool of eligible students has the potential of creating positive incentives that may help decrease the current teacher shortages as described herewith.

LPRAC for the record is mandated to review and comment on any proposed state legislation or recommendations that may affect the Latino and Puerto Rican population of the state. (LPRAC) was created by an act of the Connecticut General Assembly (CGA) in 1994. This 21 member non-partisan commission is mandated to make recommendations to the CGA and the Governor for new or enhanced policies that will foster progress in achieving health, safety, educational success, economic self-sufficiency, and end discrimination in Connecticut.

LPRAC urges your support of this bill and highly recommends its approval.