



State of Connecticut
Latino and Puerto Rican
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Testimony of Werner Oyanadel, Executive Director of LPRAC
In support of Raised H.B. No. 5385
“An Act Concerning Language Interpreters in Hospitals”
Public Health Committee
March 6, 2014

Good morning Senator Gerratana, Representative Johnson and distinguished members of the Public Health Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I speak in support of Raised H.B. 5385, “An Act Concerning Language Interpreters in Hospitals”. My name is Werner Oyanadel, Executive Director of the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission.

The Connecticut General Assembly (CGA) should adopt legislation as recommended by HB 5385 that ensures the availability of interpreter services to patients needing to communicate critical information with their treatment doctors in hospitals across Connecticut. For the record, LPRAC has recommended for several years that the Connecticut General Assembly amend volume 6, section 19a-490i (2) of the Connecticut General Statutes by eliminating the phrase “to the extent possible” and to include therewith the appropriate funds to ensure that the services will be adequately provided to patients whose primary language is spoken by an ethnic group comprising not less than 5% of those residing in the hospital's geographic service areas. This is the intent of Raised Bill No. 5385 which LPRAC supports and in our opinion would also respond to current state law that already requires the State Department of Social Services (DSS) to amend the Medicaid state plan to include foreign language interpreters as a covered service for beneficiaries with Limited English Proficiency (i.e., Public Act 07-185 § 1).

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.

We urge you to pass HB 5385.