



State of Connecticut
Latino and Puerto Rican
Affairs Commission

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Testimony of Werner Oyanadel regarding H.B. No. 6824 “An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium ending June Thirtieth 2017, and making Appropriations therefor and other provisions related to revenue.”
Thursday, March 5, 2015 – Room 2C of the LOB 11:20 AM-11:40 AM

Good morning Senator Bye, Representative Walker and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Werner Oyanadel, Executive Director of the Commission on Latino & Puerto Rican Affairs (LPRAC). I am here today to discuss the Governor’s budget recommendations for LPRAC as recommended by HB 6824 and to voice our support for all the Legislative Commissions in the Connecticut General Assembly (CGA).

We appreciate the fact that Governor Malloy has kept the Commission’s budget at current levels. For the record, the Governor’s proposed budget includes a specific line adjustment under Current Services, which would reduce LPRAC’s funding request that exceeds current services. This amount is equal to all additional initiatives that LPRAC requested for FY16 & FY17, except for the Cost of Living Adjustments (COLA), Merit for FY16 and inflation for both years. Additionally, the proposed budget includes a significant three million dollar unallocated lapse and a Statewide Hiring Reduction for the Legislative Branch. LPRAC’s prorate share of these line items total \$40,804 for the upcoming biennium. Finally, LPRAC total rescissions to date for FY15 reached 2.01% of our current appropriated budget.

LPRAC, as many of you know, is responsible for raising awareness of significant issues affecting the Latino population in Connecticut, and providing guidance, advice and expertise in the development of responsive and effective public policy. Those issues are substantial and unrelenting, and our knowledge and capabilities have been tremendously beneficial in legislation and policies that have alleviated serious obstacles facing the Latino population in our state. We are proud to work as an autonomous & non-partisan entity within the General Assembly, and the Governor, consistent with our mandate and mission – as guided by our Board of Commissioners.

However, reducing our current services for the next biennium, as it may happen during the current legislative discussions, will constrain our work at a time when demand is increasing with the changing demographics, and the issues are more complex and imperative. While we have become accustomed to functioning effectively with reduced & limited resources. Further reductions, however, would undercut our efforts and diminish our effectiveness – for Connecticut’s Latino population, and for you, members of the Connecticut General Assembly.

The Commission understands the need to control state expenditures, and the particular challenges of the current budget. But we also recognize, as you do, the growing Latino population and the critical importance of issues that include education, housing, employment, safety, health, immigration status and economic well-being.

As a state, if we are to move beyond having populations among us that are underrepresented and underserved, it takes precisely the type of concerted, collaborative, forward-thinking and ground-breaking effort that the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission provides – the future of Connecticut’s economy will depend on successfully helping the Latino population reach the middle class.

In our state budget, and in our policies, Connecticut should not waiver in our collective determination that these voices be heard, not reduced to mere whispers of untapped potential. We look forward to continuing our work to advance Connecticut, and all the people who make this an exceptional state.

LPRAC, for the record, is a nonpartisan policy agency within the legislative branch of government created in 1994 by an act of the Connecticut Legislature (i.e., P.A. 94-152, amended by P.A. 03-229 and amended by P.A. 09-07). Under Public Act 09-07, LPRAC consists of 21 appointed community leaders that are mandated to advice the Connecticut General Assembly and the Governor on policies that foster progress in the Latino communities residing in Connecticut.