



State of Connecticut

Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission

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Testimony Supporting Bills

[HB-6837](#), [HB-6835](#), and [HB-6834](#)

Orlando J. Rodriguez

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Education Committee, February 25th, 2015
Hartford, CT

Good afternoon Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleischmann, and distinguished members of the Education Committee; my name is Orlando Rodriguez and I am an Associate Legislative Analyst with the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission (LPRAC). With direction from its board, LPRAC supports bills **HB-6837 AN ACT ENCOURAGING A GRADUATED RESPONSE MODEL FOR STUDENT DISCIPLINE**, **HB-6835 AN ACT CONCERNING ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS**, and **HB-6834 AN ACT CONCERNING COLLABORATION BETWEEN BOARDS OF EDUCATION AND SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS** with modifications to each bill as listed on page 2.

The top priority for the LPRAC during this legislative session is to improve education outcomes for **all** ELL students, not just those whose native language is Spanish or Portuguese. LPRAC is greatly appreciative of the efforts underway by this committee, and Speaker Sharkey, to ensure that academic outcomes for ELL students are similar to those of non-ELL students. We have several specific recommendations on the following page, but overall laud the efforts of this committee.

In 8th grade math, Connecticut has the worst ELL vs. non-ELL education achievement gap in the country. Consequently, it is imperative that the Commissioner of the State Department of Education is consistently kept aware of the need to improve ELL education outcomes. As a result of our research and input from stakeholders, we believe the dismal academic performance of ELL students in Connecticut is a result of several factors that point to:

- A severe **void in leadership** and a lack of institutional accountability and urgency that results in a failure to effectively implement a broad range of programs that would enable ELL students to reach their academic potential;
- An arbitrarily set 30-month maximum for state-funded bilingual education when research shows it may take up to **60 months** (6 years) for some students to attain critical thinking skills in English;
- Insufficient funding (currently capped at \$1.9 million, which is an average of **\$64/year** for each ELL-eligible student) for classroom teachers to provide an effective level of bilingual instruction;
- Laws that do not address the struggles of ELL students because of an arbitrary **20-student** minimum before a district can receive state funding for bilingual education and then delays implementation until the next school year.

LPRAC is also concerned with the high rate of in-school juvenile arrest among Hispanic children. Currently in grades 6-12, arrests of Hispanic children are more than three times the rate of non-Hispanic white children.¹ We must address this grave injustice even where it is not deemed a sufficiently high priority by local boards of education.

LPRAC is extremely grateful for this committee's support for better educational outcomes for Latino children and we look forward to continuing to work with legislators, the State Department of Education, and other stakeholders for the benefit of both Latino children and the nearly 35,000 ELL students in Connecticut, which include a significant number who are not Hispanic.

Recommended Modifications to HB-6837, HB-6835, and HB-6834

LPRAC supports **HB-6837** with the following modifications to Section 3:

- The strategic school profile for each school and district should include the number of ELL-eligible students and the number of those receiving state-funded bilingual education.
- Reporting for non-Charter schools should include the number of students, both ELL and non-ELL, who transferred into the school from a Charter school after the state's official school census (enrollment) date.
- Reporting for Charter schools should include the number of students, both ELL and non-ELL, who transferred out to a non-Charter school after the state's official school census (enrollment) date.

LPRAC support **HB-6835** with the following modifications:

- Section 1(b) should provide state-funded bilingual education funding for **all** ELL-eligible students without a minimum threshold of six or more in a public school.
- Section 1(b)(a) should provide state funds for bilingual education starting the next school semester (currently "school year next following"). Otherwise, non-English speaking students entering classrooms in August could fail to learn an entire year of curriculum because of a lack of bilingual instruction.
- Section 2 should include mandatory reporting **every six months** on the effectiveness of bilingual education by the Commissioner of the State Department of Education to both the State Board of Education and this committee.
- Section 2(3) should be changed to require reporting of all revenues and expenditures for ELL education to be provided annually on the Uniform Chart of Accounts (2014 General Statute § 7-406(c)) for each public school including, but not limited to, accounting items as currently used in Title III reporting to the federal government.

LPRAC supports **HB-6834** with the modifications:

- In Section 1, "**may** include a graduated response model" should be changed to "**must** include a graduated response model."
- Section 2 should also include school-based arrest data disaggregated by grade and English Language Learner status (ELL-eligible vs. not ELL). Furthermore, reporting of arrest data should include the number of total arrests corresponding to the multiple arrests of one individual, without disclosing the identity of the individual.

¹ Data received from Angela Gambaccini-May (CSDE) via email on 13nov2014.