



State of Connecticut

Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission

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Testimony Supporting Bill [HB-6979](#)

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Hartford, CT

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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 bill [HB-6979](#) An Act Establishing a Task Force to Study Declining Student Enrollment.

In 2007, I calculated population projections for OPM that forecast declining enrollments.¹ From 2011-2012 to 2013-2014, over 70 percent of school districts had declining enrollments.² More recent population projections estimate a continued decline of roughly 70,000 children (age 5 to 19) from 2015 to 2025.³

The reasons for declining enrollments are well-known and include (1) lower fertility rates and (2) out-migration from Connecticut. Rural areas are experiencing some of the largest percentage declines because of a lack of jobs to attract young families with children. Select towns where there is economic growth or atypical demographics might not have a declining student population; however, it is highly unlikely that the overall statewide trend of smaller K-12 populations will change within the next decade.

Other New England states, Europe, and China are also experiencing a decreasing population of children coupled with an increasing population of retirees on fixed incomes. Consequently, the mandate for this task force should also include an initial inquiry into alternative financing models for K-12.

Within the next five years, the population of Hispanic children will reach roughly 25 percent of children (age 5 to 19) in Connecticut.⁴ For this reason, LPRAC is deeply concerned that the current heavy dependence on property taxes to fund K-12 education is not sustainable and will pit the needs of the young against the needs of the elderly, which is the most important policy issue we must resolve.⁵

LPRAC is grateful to this committee for its ongoing focus on the needs of Connecticut's young Latino population. We welcome the opportunity to participate on this task force if asked.

¹ [2005-2030 Population Projections for Connecticut](#)

² Enrollments from CSDE at <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2758&q=334898>

³ 2015-2025 Population Projections for Connecticut at <http://web2.uconn.edu/ctsd/ctsd/projections.html>

⁴ 2005-2030 Population Projections for Connecticut

http://web2.uconn.edu/ctsd/ctsd/projections/2005_2030_projections.html

⁵ [Income, race and working population trends: a perfect storm for Connecticut?](#)