



# *State of Connecticut*

## *Latino and Puerto Rican*

### *Affairs Commission*

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Testimony In Support of HB 5734

LPRAC Commissioner Migdalia Castro

Board Member of the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission

Environment Committee, March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2015

Hartford, CT

Good afternoon Senator Kennedy, Representative Albis, and distinguished members of the Environment Committee; my name is Migdalia Castro a board member of the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission (LPRAC). LPRAC is fully supportive of Committee Bill No. 5734 "An Act Concerning Farmers' Market Coupons for Senior Citizens."

The Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) is a very effective supplemental food program for low income seniors 60 years of age or older, with incomes that do not exceed 185% of poverty income guidelines – funded jointly by the State of Connecticut and the United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service (USDA-FNS). Currently each eligible recipient receives a total of five three-dollar checks (\$18 per recipient, per market season), which can be redeemed at approved locations throughout Connecticut for fruits, vegetables, fresh cut herbs, and honey. This bill, if adopted by the legislature, would help increase the minimum voucher amount from \$18 to \$21 per market season – a small amount which has the potential to help our elderly population afford slightly more nutritional food and help stimulate an increased demand for Connecticut-grown produce at Connecticut farmer's markets.

This is of paramount importance to LPRAC because of our significant number of Hispanic households age 65+ with an annual income less than \$25,000 that could significantly benefit from an increase as suggested in HB5734. Connecticut, you see, is facing a significant aging population shift – particularly for people 85 and over. An important point for the environment committee to keep in mind since the growth in this population will accelerate at a higher rate in the next few years as baby boomers continue to retire. It is within this context that we at LPRAC support legislation such as HB 5734. It is no surprise to lawmakers that the Consumer Price Index for all urban consumers has grown in the last decade and the elderly purchasing power for the elderly continues to stagnate or not keep pace with inflation. It is our hope that the Connecticut General Assembly make strides to make sure that HB 5744 is approved and that more funding be considered in the Appropriations Committee to be invested this year on this program so that the suggested increase doesn't affect current clients from utilizing this successful program in an affordable way.

LPRAC 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 advise the Connecticut General Assembly and the Governor on policies that foster progress in the Latino communities residing in Connecticut.