



State of Connecticut
Latino and Puerto Rican
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Testimony Supporting Bills
 HB-5793, HB-6086, and HB-6638

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Government Administration and Elections Committee
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 Hartford, CT

Good afternoon Senator Cassano, Representative Jutila, and distinguished members of the Government Administration and Elections 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-5793 An Act Establishing Safe Haven Day, HB-6086 An Act Expanding the Set-Aside Program to Include Municipalities and State Grant Programs, and HB-6638 An Act Concerning State-Wide Percentage Goals and Individual Participation Percentage Goals for the Award of State Procurement Contracts to Minority Business Enterprises.

Connecticut's Safe Haven Law allows a mother to leave their infant at a hospital without fear of criminal prosecution or social stigma. This is a practical and humane alternative for a new mother who may find herself unable or unwilling to raise their newborn child. In Connecticut, more than half of all births are in the state's five largest towns of Bridgeport, New Haven, Stamford, Hartford, and Waterbury.^{1,2} These towns also have among the highest yearly population turn-over rates in the state ranging from 8.5 percent in Stamford to 17 percent in Hartford.³ To continue to be effective, the Safe Haven Law requires ongoing promotion to maintain awareness in towns such as these that account for most of the state's births and where there are high rates of population transiency.

The Great Recession in Connecticut was particularly difficult for Hispanic workers. While the unemployment rate for whites peaked at 7.5 percent in 2010, unemployment among Hispanics peaked at a dramatically higher 17.8 percent in 2011.⁴ Currently, Connecticut has the 6th highest unemployment rate for Hispanics nationwide even as Hispanics will be needed to fill thousands of job openings created by the state's retiring Baby Boomers.⁵

In 2013, working-age Hispanics (age 18-64) accounted for 15 percent⁶ of the state's working-age population, which will grow to over 20 percent⁷ by 2030. Consequently, it is vital to the state's economic future that Hispanic workers start entering the workforce now in large numbers to gain those skills necessary to meet the future workforce needs of Connecticut businesses. Connecticut's Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) program is a good way to target a small percentage of state spending to create jobs and build employable skills among Latino workers who want to work but have a disproportionately high level of unemployment.

¹ DPH 2011 births at http://www.ct.gov/dph/cwp/view.asp?a=3132&q=394598&dphNav_GID=1601

² ACS 2013 1-yr table B01001

³ ACS 2013 1-yr S0701; moved within county in the past year

⁴ <http://www.ctvoices.org/sites/default/files/econ14workingct.pdf>

⁵ ACS 2013 1-yr table S2301.

⁶ ACS 2013 1-yr tables B01001 and B01001.

⁷ Connecticut's Changing Demographics Foreshadow Declining Workforce Income

In fiscal year 2013-2014, \$430 million of state grants to municipalities⁸ and more than \$220 million in state grants for school building projects⁹ were excluded from the Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) set-aside. We believe these millions of dollars in state grants should also be included in the MBE set-aside to increase the number and type of contracts targeted at workers with high rates of unemployment.

We also want to ensure MBE contracts are evenly distributed between racial/ethnic minorities and women. Unfortunately, current reporting of MBE utilization makes it difficult to determine how evenly MBE contracts are distributed among the various target groups. Consequently, we need to fund the development of a **Diversity Data Management System** to track MBE contracts as recommended by the Connecticut Disparity Study: Phase 2, and which is a requirement for this study to be completed.¹⁰

LPRAC thanks you for your interest in our policy agenda and looks forward to working with legislators and stakeholders on these issues of common interest that are of great real-world importance to Latino communities.

⁸ FY 2013, FY 2014 AND FY 2015 Estimates of State Formula Aid to Municipalities; excluding ECS and Adult Ed from statutory grantee-specific programs; \$430,442,312 = (\$2,441,041,566 - (\$20,613,915 + \$1,989,985,339))

⁹ 2014 DAS School Building Project Priorities, tables 3 & 4 excluding the CT Technical High School System (\$220,579,041 = \$180,715,092 + \$39,863,949)

¹⁰ Connecticut Academy of Science and Engineering