



**State of Connecticut**  
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**Affairs Commission**

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Testimony in Support of House Bill 6898

Orlando J. Rodriguez

Associate Legislative Analyst, Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission

Committee on Children, March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2015

Hartford, CT

Senator Bartolemeo, Representative Urban, and distinguished members of the Committee on Children; my name is Orlando Rodriguez and I am an Associate Legislative Analyst with the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission (LPRAC). LPRAC supports **HB 6898 An Act Concerning the Marketing of Unhealthy Foods in Schools**.

It is imperative that we reduce the high incidence of diabetes among Hispanic children, which have the **2<sup>nd</sup> highest** rate of obesity among racial/ethnic groups (grades 9-12) and who will account for 25 percent of Connecticut's children by 2020.<sup>1</sup> There is also an added economic cost associated with obesity, as a child with type II diabetes will incur nearly \$9,150 annually in additional healthcare costs.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, 70 percent of overweight adolescents will become overweight adults.<sup>3</sup> In Connecticut in 2003, diabetes cost **\$1.7 billion** in direct and indirect costs.<sup>4</sup>

The Connecticut General Assembly must enact legislation that encourages healthy food choices by students to reduce the incidence of childhood diabetes. Schools should be a sanctuary from the day-to-day onslaught of advertising for unhealthy food and beverages. Going even further, schools should be proactive and prominently display, in different languages as needed, the negative health consequences of unhealthy food and beverages.

To reduce the incidence of childhood diabetes among Latinos, we must enact policies that encourage healthy changes in the diets of Latino children from an early age. "A healthy meal plan for people to reduce the potential for childhood diabetes is generally the same as a healthy diet for anyone."<sup>5</sup> The diet should be, "... low in saturated and trans fat, moderate in salt and sugar, with meals based on lean protein, non-starchy vegetables, whole grains, healthy fats and fruit."<sup>6</sup>

LPRAC strongly recommends support for this legislation, which would result in tangible improvements in the lifelong health of Latino children throughout Connecticut.

<sup>1</sup> [Epidemiology of Childhood Obesity by Sally S. Wong](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Impact Of Childhood Obesity On Employers](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Epidemiology of Childhood Obesity by Sally S. Wong](#)

<sup>4</sup> [The Connecticut Diabetes Prevention and Control Plan 2007-2012](#)

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.diabetes.org/diabetes-basics/myths/>

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*