

Testimony in support of the
Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission Budget

Appropriations Committee, March 5, 2015
Hartford, CT

Senator Bye and Representative Walker and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee – my name is Lucas Codognolla and I am the Lead Coordinator of Connecticut Students for a Dream, a statewide network of undocumented immigrant youth and allies. I am here today to speak in support of all the Legislative Commissions and, particularly, on behalf of the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission's (LPRAC) budget.

As a Latino youth I appreciate the fact that there is a legislative commission that has a mandate to support the advancement of my community in Connecticut. The Hispanic population grew nearly 50 percent during the past decade, and today, it is 14.7 percent of the state's population and is one of the youngest populations with an average of 28 years old. It is vital that policy makes continue to acknowledge this fast-growing population and have experts at the capitol that can provide reliable information and community collaborations with LPRAC's efforts.

LPRAC has been essential in helping Connecticut Students for a Dream in our fight for educational equality for undocumented students in the state. In 2011, LPRAC worked closely with Connecticut Dreamers in successful passage of the Connecticut Dream Act and continues to work with us in our efforts to make higher education affordable. Most importantly, LPRAC currently is the only state agency that provides scholarships for Latino youth despite of immigration status. This has changed the lives of many, including some of my friends, who are now enrolled in college and pursuing their dreams.

I am aware that the Appropriations Committee is reviewing major cutbacks in key areas of the state budget; however, it is crucial to recognize the growing needs of the Latino population in the state. Through the two recent rescissions experienced by the agency, the agency's viability will be negatively impacted. I urge the committee to find innovative ways to trim the budget without cutting back on the services for the most vulnerable populations.

Sincerely,
Lucas Codognolla
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