



**State of Connecticut**  
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Testimony of Werner Oyanadel, Executive Director of LPRAC before the Higher Education Committee

Thursday, February 26, 2015

10:30 AM in Room 1E of the LOB

In Support of SB 398 and H.B. No. 6116

Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Willis, and distinguished members of the Higher Education & Employment Advancement Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly (CGA); my name is Werner Oyanadel, Executive Director of the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission (LPRAC). I am here to speak in support of Proposed Bills SB 398 and HB No. 6116.

LPRAC fully supports Proposed Bill No. 398 "AN ACT ASSISTING STUDENTS ACCEPTED INTO THE DEFERRED ACTION FOR CHILDHOOD ARRIVALS PROGRAM WITH THE COST OF COLLEGE (DACA)<sup>1</sup>," which would enable low income Connecticut students that lack immigration status the ability to better afford a college education in our state – In 2011 the Connecticut General Assembly adopted Public Act 11-43 which addressed accessibility issues for this population.

In specific, we recommend the higher education committee to reduce the requirements for in-state tuition rates from four years to two years of high school in Connecticut – this recommendation is currently not in Sen. Looney's bill (SB 398) but we highly recommend the Higher Education Committee to consider amending it as suggested by the Governor's Bill No. 6844. LPRAC also urges this committee to expand SB 398 to a broader student population, not just DACA eligible students, so we can better serve a wider number of student's with financial needs.

I would also like to point out to the committee that providing state financial aid to undocumented immigrants would not result in a cost to the state. According to preliminary information released from the Office of Fiscal Analysis (OFA) on the subject we found out that existing funds would simply be spread across a larger population of students. Additionally, I would like to highlight that reducing 4 year in-state requirement to 2 year for in-state tuition (HB6844) as recommended by the Governor's Office is also not anticipated to result in a fiscal impact to the constituent units of higher education. The University of Connecticut and the Connecticut State University System have policies or the ability to adjust the ratio of in-state to out-of-state students and therefore can make charging in-state tuition to persons without legal immigration status who reside in Connecticut revenue neutral. The Regional Community-Technical Colleges as far as data can tells us have no such persons paying out-of-state tuition and therefore it is also anticipated reducing the number of years required for in-state tuition from 4 to 2 as having no fiscal impact it all.

Furthermore, we applaud the Governor for proposing to set aside \$150,000 in FY16 and \$300,000 in FY17 from the Governor's Scholarship program for a merit-based grant available to students that lack immigration status that I believe should be merged with



SB 398. The Governor’s office is currently working with New Haven Promise as the likely administrator of this merit-based grant program because of their track record of administering a similar grant program for New Haven students, including undocumented New Haven residents. This grant program will be available to undocumented students with Connecticut residency attending public institutions of higher education in Connecticut – again LPRAC supports this recommendation and urges the Higher Education to do so too.

LPRAC also supports Proposed Bill No. 6116 “AN ACT INCREASING THE NUMBER OF INTERNSHIPS AND SUMMER JOBS FOR LOW-INCOME YOUTH THROUGHOUT CONNECTICUT.” Connecticut has very high unemployment rates for its young workers looking for their first job. In many of the state’s towns, unemployment for those ages 16-19 is over 25 percent, which is much higher the statewide unemployment rate of 6.4 percent as of December 2014. Historically, young workers from low-income households obtained their first job through federal summer jobs programs; however, funding for these programs has been cut. Each year a young adult does not get their first job, they become harder to employ and it increases their chances of becoming dependent upon social services for much of their life. It has been estimated that each opportunity youth (i.e. idle or disconnected; not working and not in school) results in, “...an immediate taxpayer burden of \$13,900 per year and an immediate social burden of \$37,450 per year.” After age 25, each opportunity youth will, “... impose a future lifetime taxpayer burden of \$170,740 and a social burden of \$529,030.” In addition to increasing workforce readiness, some summer job programs for low-income youth have resulted in (1) increased school attendance, (2) decreases in violent crime arrests, and (3) decreases in drug and alcohol use.

It is within this context that LPRAC urges the Higher Education & Employment Advancement Committee to support Proposed Bill No. 6116, which – If adopted by the Connecticut General Assembly – would increase the number of state-funded internships and summer jobs for low-income youth in urban and rural areas with the highest youth unemployment rates and to implement a lottery system for internships and summer job programs to ensure there is no nepotism involved in hiring for such internships and jobs.

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

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<sup>i</sup> **Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)** is an American immigration policy which allows certain undocumented immigrants who entered the country before their 16th birthday and before June 2007 to receive a renewable two-year work permit and exemption from deportation. It does not confer legal immigration status or provide a path to citizenship. It was started by the Obama administration in June 2012.