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Testimony in Support of Judicial Nominees Hernandez, Prats, and Williams

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Judiciary Committee, January 16th, 2015
Hartford, CT

Senator Coleman, Senator Kissel, Representative Tong, Representative Rebimbas, and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Orlando Rodriguez and I am an Associate Legislative Analyst with the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission (LPRAC). LPRAC wholeheartedly supports the nominations of Alex Hernandez, Sheila Prats, and Omar Williams to the Superior Court.

The Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission opines that these three candidates are well qualified and have professional experience ranging from the private practice of corporate law to public defender. Attorney Hernandez was previously an Assistant U.S. Attorney in Bridgeport where he prosecuted organized crime and drug trafficking, and is currently a director of the Connecticut Hispanic Bar Association (CHBA). Attorney Prats is a former Superior Court Judge who from 2004 to 2011 represented indigent minor juvenile matters as a Deputy Assistant Public Defender. She is a founding director of the CHBA. As a public defender, Attorney Williams played an integral role in improvements to the Model Criminal Jury Instructions, which was relevant beyond the interest of his client and now benefits defendants and jurors alike. Attorney Williams has been endorsed by both the CHBA and the George W. Crawford Black Bar Association.

These three nominees are excellent examples of the diversity of the Latino population in Connecticut. Attorney Prats was born in Puerto Rico and struggled to learn English while enrolled at UConn. Attorney Williams' mother was a Mexican-American farm worker and his father is Jamaican. Attorneys Hernandez, Prats, and Williams will provide Connecticut's court system with diverse life experiences to further our court system's ability to deliver well-versed judgments and increase respect for the courts among the state's Latino residents. As Attorney Hernandez stated in his judicial application, "...every case is the most important case to any given juror, litigant, witness or victim who has contact with our judicial system, and an effective judicial officer needs to project a genuine sense of understanding and appropriate level of concern."

LPRAC would like to thank Governor Malloy for these nominations and for his understanding that the courts, and its judges, should reflect the state's increasingly diverse demographics.

I thank you for your time and encourage you to support the nominations of attorneys Hernandez, Prats, and Williams.