

**Testimony Regarding
H.B. 5044, An Act Making Adjustments to State Expenditures for the
Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2017
&
Funding for the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission (LPRAC)**

Katie Roy, Director & Founder
Committee on Appropriations
Friday, February 19, 2016

Senator Bye, Representative Walker, and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony regarding H.B. 5044 and the State's budget for the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission (LPRAC).

My name is Katie Roy and I am the director and founder of the Connecticut School Finance Project. The Connecticut School Finance Project is a nonpartisan, nonprofit project that aims to fix the illogical and inequitable system by which Connecticut funds its public schools. My testimony today is in opposition to H.B. 5044's current elimination of funding for LPRAC for the next fiscal year.

Since our organization's inception, we have had the opportunity to work with LPRAC on issues affecting the state's growing Latino community, such as funding for Connecticut's English Language Learning students and the impacts of the state's broken school finance system on school districts and communities with significant Latino populations. Each time we work and interact with LPRAC staff and commissioners, we witness firsthand the vital role they play in representing the diverse and important interests of Connecticut's continually growing Latino population.

Despite an ever-increasing Hispanic population of more than 540,000 (15 percent of the state's total population)¹, Connecticut currently only has one Latino state senator² and only 11 Latino state representatives.³ The limited number of Latino members in the General Assembly make LPRAC's role even more vital. LPRAC helps give Connecticut's Latino population a louder voice and makes sure the needs of an underrepresented group do not go unnoticed.

The significant role LPRAC plays in bringing to light the needs and interests of Connecticut's diverse Latino population is particularly important when it comes to issues

¹ Connecticut Department of Public Health. (2015). *Estimate for the Population of Connecticut by Age Group, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Ethnicity: July 1, 2014*. Retrieved from <http://www.ct.gov/dph/cwp/view.asp?a=3132&q=388152>.

² Connecticut Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission. (2016). *Latino State Senators in Connecticut 2015 to 2017*. Available from <https://lprac.maps.arcgis.com/apps/PanelsLegend/index.html?appid=68afe5e2e89847de8917b54299876d76>.

³ Connecticut Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission. (2016). *Latino State Representatives in Connecticut 2015 to 2017*. Available from <https://lprac.maps.arcgis.com/apps/PanelsLegend/index.html?appid=305ed0eb7d494bb1958f7c694817480f>.

of education finance. Currently, public school districts in Connecticut serving the highest percentage of Hispanic students receive \$1,270 less per student than districts serving the lowest percentage.^{4 5} Additionally, the 10 local public school districts with the largest enrollments of non-White students receive, on average, \$805 per student less than the 10 districts with the largest enrollments of White students.^{6 7}

This funding disparity is particularly important when one looks at the enrollment trends and population projections of Connecticut's public schools. Districts in the top 25 percent for growth in enrollment from 2009-2014 served 73.9 percent of all Hispanic public school students in Connecticut.⁸ Additionally, of students enrolled in districts that gained enrollment over the past five years, 33 percent were Hispanic.⁹ These districts also had an average low-income population of 49.5 percent.¹⁰ In comparison, of students enrolled in districts that experienced the largest enrollment declines over the past five years, 81 percent were White.¹¹ These districts also had an average low-income population of 21.1 percent.¹²

Furthermore, of the 20 local public school districts with the highest percentage of Hispanic students, nine districts are projected to experience gains in their school-aged resident populations by 2025.^{13 14} In comparison, only seven other districts in the state are projected to see growth in their school-aged resident populations.¹⁵ This is consistent with the projection that growth of Connecticut's Latino population will account for approximately 64 percent of the state's total population growth over the next 10 years.¹⁶

An increasing Latino population, coupled with funding and need disparities in school districts serving the largest populations of Hispanic students, make thorough representative of Latino needs and interests more important than ever. Since its inception, LPRAC has helped provide invaluable representation for Connecticut's often underrepresented Latino community. I respectfully ask the Committee to continue fully funding LRPAC so it may continue this representation and advocacy, and help ensure the state's Latino population—especially Connecticut's Latino students—are heard and engaged.

⁴ Connecticut State Department of Education. (2014). *2013-14 End of School Year Report (ED 001) data*. Available from <http://ctschoolfinance.org/data/end-of-year-school-reports-ed001-2009-14>.

⁵ Connecticut State Department of Education. (2015). *CT Public School Enrollment_2000.mdb*. Available from <http://ctschoolfinance.org/data/connecticut-school-enrollment>.

⁶ Connecticut State Department of Education. (2014). *2013-14 End of School Year Report (ED 001) data*. Available from <http://ctschoolfinance.org/data/end-of-year-school-reports-ed001-2009-14>.

⁷ Connecticut State Department of Education. (2015). *CT Public School Enrollment_2000.mdb*. Available from <http://ctschoolfinance.org/data/connecticut-school-enrollment>.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Batt, S., Guarino, Z., & Zheng, Q. (2015). *Demographic Change in Connecticut School Districts* [Data visualizations]. Storrs, CT: Connecticut State Data Center. Retrieved from <http://blogs.lib.uconn.edu/outsidetheneatline/2015/07/24/demographic-change-in-connecticut-school-districts/>.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Connecticut State Data Center at the University of Connecticut Libraries Map and Geographic Information Center – MAGIC. (2007). *2005-2030 Population Projections for Connecticut*. Retrieved from http://ctsd.c.uconn.edu/2005_2030_projections/.

Thank you again for allowing me the opportunity to submit written testimony, and please feel free to contact me should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Katie", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

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