

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),

Senator Bye, Representative Walker, and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee: My name is Jay Gonzalez, Commissioner of the Latino & Puerto Rican Affairs Commission (LPRAC). I would like to speak in opposition to the budget recommendations offered by the Governor regarding our agency budget.

As a member of LPRAC, I am fully aware of the impact that our Commission has on the Latino Community. The support that our organization has amongst the state latinos is well known. We strive to do our best for our community as a whole and have made quite a difference in the lives of our CT Hispanics. Please recognize the positivity that LPRAC has as one of the only legislative outlets that state residents of latino dissent have at their disposal. Every year many latino youths benefit from scholarships offered by LPRAC and that should not be hindered. I have learned a great deal serving on LPRAC's Commission and feel the work that is done for our community is of extreme importance. LPRAC has shined a light on many important issues in our community and should not be disturbed, while we understand the importance of budget cuts, LPRAC should remain.

LPRAC is also keenly aware of the state's budgetary constraints and has responded. Budget rescissions and cutbacks have reduced our budget disproportionately – by more than 32.5 percent between the Great Recession, beginning in FY 09, and current FY 16. This total percentage includes a 13 percent reduction due to a number of lapses and rescissions mandated as recent as this fiscal year. LPRAC has taken seriously the suggestion that it supplement state funds to accomplish its mission. This year, LPRAC earned a two-year \$40,000 grant from the Connecticut Health Foundation for oral health outreach; raised \$22,000 for scholarships to the Latino youth; and received a \$100,000 lead poisoning prevention grant from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention & the State Department of Public Health.

LPRAC's proposed budget as recommended by the Governor of Connecticut for FY 17 would reduce our already **disproportionately** reduced budget by an additional **\$46,453 – this is the sum of 5.75% new reductions recommended by the Governor plus a number of other lapses due next year**. Cuts that in total would almost cripple the operating funds of our agency in its entirety. It is within this context that LPRAC opposes such draconian/disproportional reduction and call on the Appropriations Committee to maintain LPRAC budget to current appropriated funds **[highlight the fact that a "flat-line" appropriation is still less than already appropriated]** . LPRAC, for the record, also opposes the governor's consolidation of the agency's operating funds with personal services such action will be less transparent and an accounting nightmare. Currently, state agency appropriations are distributed between multiple line items. The Governor's Revised FY 17 budget consolidates funding by collapsing most or all appropriations into a new "Agency Operations" line item. LPRAC wants to work with Appropriations Committee finding a fair solution to our state's budgetary problems and look forward to being part of the legislative branch in the near future as we have for the past 20 years.

Please consider the positive message LPRAC has ALWAYS had towards our community. We are an essential part of the CT General Assembly and should remain as such.

Jay Gonzalez

LPRAC Commissioner