



February 16, 2016

Appropriation Committee Co-Chairs
Senator Beth Bye and Representative Toni Walker

Re: House Bill No. 5044 AN ACT MAKING ADJUSTMENTS TO STATE EXPENDITURES FOR
THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2017

Dear Co-Chairs Bye and Walker,

I write in support of the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission (LPRAC), a vital public entity that is essential to ensuring the health and rights of our state's growing Latino community. The proposed funding bill no. 5044 would have devastating consequences for a critical advocate of the health and rights of our state's vibrant Latino population.

I write from the particular perspectives of a resident of the state of Connecticut, a father of three Latina/o children who –I hope– will one day contribute to this state's wellbeing and economic advancement, and lastly as a professor of History and Director of the Institute of Latino, Caribbean, and Latin American Studies at the University of Connecticut

My most immediate concern is how any potential cuts will negatively affect the important work of the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission. I have worked with the staff and board of LPRAC since my arrival at UConn in 2004, collaborating on a number of initiatives including the 2010 publication of a richly informative report, *Connecticut Latinos: Evidence from the Connecticut Samples of the Latino National Survey –New England*. Like much of the influential work conducted by LPRAC's staff, *Connecticut Latinos* examines the experience of our state's Latino population, seeking to better understand the obstacles to greater democratic access and equity. The report details the importance of our state's fastest growing population, and one with increasing economic and political power and relevance. Situating CT's Latinos within their larger national context, LPRAC's efforts have been critical in shedding light on country-wide demographic trends that have seen growing presence of Latinos in every state.

Although the current total number of people of Latin American and Caribbean heritage and origin in New England is still small compared to other immigrant groups, Latinos have the fastest rate of population growth of any immigrant population in the region, with Connecticut receiving more Latinos than any other New England state in the past decade (at 15%, the population has exceeded half a million). Without a doubt, the rapidly growing Latino population will continue to have considerable impact on the state in the future and thus demands the careful and close examination afforded by LPRAC.

The shifting Latino demographics in Connecticut have much to teach us about broader national trends where the arrival and incorporation of Latin American and Caribbean migrants to new areas are reshaping social and political relations. Given the rapid growth of Connecticut's Latino migrants into the twenty-first century and their political, economic, social, and cultural influence, it is of utmost importance that academics, politicians, and community groups alike take a stake in learning more about the crucial role Latinos play in the Nutmeg State.

**El Instituto: Institute of Latina/o,
Caribbean, & Latin American Studies**

2006 HILLSIDE ROAD, UNIT 1161
STORRS, CT 06269-1161
PHONE 860.486.5508
FAX 860.486.3794
www.elin.uconn.edu

The absence of sustained research and analysis of the Latino/a population by LPRAC in the long run will only damage the state's overall understanding of and engagement with of this important population.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mark Overmyer-Velázquez". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "M".

Mark Overmyer-Velázquez
Director, El Instituto
Associate Professor of History
mark.velazquez@uconn.edu