

Summary of Testimony by Charles R. Venator-Santiago supporting the funding of LPRAC for the 2016-2017 fiscal year and opposing the HB No. 5044, *An Act Making Adjustments to State Expenditures for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2017*.

I write supporting the funding of the LPRAC for the 2016-2017 fiscal year. My letter makes three arguments. First, the LPRAC is the leading source of data and information on Latino/as in the state of Connecticut. Second, it is the leading non-partisan agency that gives a voice to Latino/as in the public law and policymaking process in the state of CT. Third, the LPRAC is a key partner to the relevant faculty and staff at the University of Connecticut. For these and other reasons, the LPRAC should be fully funded for the upcoming year (and permanently if possible).

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Appropriations Committee
Connecticut General Assembly (CGA)
Legislative Office Building, Room 2700
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Members of the CGA Appropriations Committee,

I am writing to support the funding of the Latino & Puerto Rican Affairs Committee (LPRAC) and in opposition to House Bill No. 5044, *An Act Making Adjustments to State Expenditures for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2017*. It is my understanding that the members of CGA Appropriations Committee will vote on the reducing the funding for the LPRAC for the fiscal year 2016-2017. For the reasons outlined below, I think that this is a great mistake and I would like to voice my opposition to this bill. I believe that the LPRAC should be fully funded for the upcoming fiscal year.

Leading Source of Data on Latino/as in CT. The LPRAC is the leading source of reliable information and data on Latino/as in the state of Connecticut. The information and data collected by the LPRAC typically enables the most comprehensive understanding of how CT public policies will affect Latino/as in the state. To date, there is no other agency or entity in the state of CT that can compile and make this data available to the public (and researchers like myself). Eliminating funding for LPRAC, and by extension forcing LPRAC to reduce its services or close, is tantamount to eliminating public access to reliable data and comprehensive information about the state of Latino/as in CT.

Non-Partisan Voice of Latino/as in CT. The LPRAC is the key non-partisan agency and voice for Latino/as in CT. I first began to work with the LPRAC in 2008, when I arrived at the University of Connecticut, in the *¡Tu Voto Si Cuenta!* voter registration campaign. Since then I have either collaborated on some initiatives or mostly witnessed how LPRAC has organized an array of policy initiatives addressing the needs of Latino/as in the state of CT. Most recently, when I was contacted by the *National Puerto Rican Agenda (NPRA)* to help organized a coalition of Puerto Rican leaders in Connecticut, I first contacted the LPRAC and they promptly organized and hosted a meeting in Hartford. Unlike other organizations, the LPRAC was able to bring together an array of voices from divergent political perspectives into one room. Given the enduring polarization among Latino/as and Puerto Ricans having the LPRAC available to provide a

non-biased space for discussions is critical.

UConn Collaboration. The LPRAC has always supported collaborative initiatives with the University of Connecticut faculty and other academic institutions. More recently, we are in conversations to organize a Latino/a policy internship program, policy-brief publications of issues affecting Latino/as in CT, and, a host of other educational activities. In my experience, the LPRAC has been a key partner in academic initiatives addressing various needs of Latino/as in the state of Connecticut.

For these and other reasons, I want to reiterate the need to fund the LPRAC for the 2016-2017 fiscal year. Reducing the funding LPRAC will curtail the ability of Latino/as to participate in the law and policymaking process in Connecticut and other national conversations. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at your convenience at 413-219-5933 or at charles.venator@uconn.edu.

Sincerely,

Charles R. Venator Santiago