



Testimony on Proposed SB No. 126: An Act Concerning Community Health Workers

Submitted to the Connecticut General Assembly's Public Health Committee

Submitted by Ingrid Alvarez, Connecticut State Director, Hispanic Federation

February 9, 2017

Co-Chairs Steinberg, Gerratana, Somers, Vice-chairs Kennedy, Logan Luxenberg, Ranking Members, and members of the Committee, my name is Ingrid Alvarez and I am the Connecticut State Director of the Hispanic Federation (HF). Hispanic Federation is the premier Latino membership organization in the nation founded to address the many inequities confronting Latinos and the nonprofits that serve them. For more than 20 years, Hispanic Federation has provided grants, administered human services and coordinated advocacy for our broad network of agencies that serve more than 2 million Latinos in areas of health, education, economic empowerment, immigration and civic engagement.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony and present the views of the Hispanic Federation's 13 Latino Nonprofit member agencies across Connecticut in full support of Proposed SB 126: An Act Concerning Community Health Workers. Latino health indicators in Connecticut are deeply troubling. Serious health disparities persist between Latinos and the general population, including increased incidence of obesity, diabetes, asthma, HIV/AIDS, cancer rates and disproportionately high mortality rates. Illness in Latino communities, especially in the immigrant community, is compounded by poverty, language barriers and limited healthcare interaction.

Additionally, the cultural competence of health care providers and their inability to understand and respond effectively to these challenges and differences exacerbate the prevalence and increased incidence of preventable diseases. I'd like to share just a few examples that indicate the extent of the health crisis facing our community:

- In 2012, of the 10,474 people living with HIV in Connecticut, 32% were Hispanic
- Latinos in Connecticut have 51% higher mortality rates due to diabetes and 45% higher mortality rates due to diabetes-related causes than their non-Hispanic white neighbors
- Among children under 6 years of age who had a confirmed blood lead test in 2012, Hispanics (4.1%) were significantly more likely to be lead poisoned at levels of 5 g/dL than Non-Hispanics (2.6%)⁶
- In 2010, 9.2% of adults and 11.3% of children in Connecticut had asthma. Hispanic adults had 5.2 times the rate of asthma hospitalizations as non-Hispanic White adults from 2000-2009 and during that period Hispanic children had the highest asthma ER visit rates of all ethnic and racial subgroups.¹

¹ <http://hispanicfederation.org/images/pdf/latinoconnecticutreport2014web.pdf>

There is robust scientific evidence and national best practice models documenting not only that Community Health Workers (CHW's) and their various health education interventions work, but that they are also cost-effective. Community Health workers are able to visit patients at home, assess and monitor their health, and link them with clinics and hospitals. Specifically, in communities of color community health workers are representative of the communities they serve and trusted to provide high-quality services for a wide range of chronic yet preventable health problems. They are partners in creating and sustaining health care access and eliminating challenges in receiving quality comprehensive care. CHW's also lead linguistically and culturally competent education campaigns, empowering community members to take active roles in their own health outcomes.

These principles serve as the basis for our support for moving forward with full integration of community health workers into our health care system in Connecticut and consistent with our state's Healthcare Innovation Plan-SIM. CHW's are part of whole-person-centered health care system and provide a return on investment in our communities for achieving community health and eliminating health inequities. We fully support this legislative proposal of working towards full recognition, integration, and sustainability of Community Health Workers (CHWs) in Connecticut by:

- 1) Codifying the definition of a Community Health Worker as defined and agreed to by the SIM CHW Advisory Committee
- 2) Defining the roles of CHWs
- 3) Establishing a CHW Integration Council to make recommendations on a sustainable CHW program in CT by the start of FY19.

Hispanic Federation looks forward to working with you to prevent chronic illness, improve the quality of lives, and achieve health equity for all of Connecticut's residents.

Respectfully submitted,

Ingrid Alvarez

Appendix

To the Testimony of Ingrid Alvarez, Connecticut State Director Hispanic Federation

Hispanic Federation

The mission of Hispanic Federation is to empower and advance the Hispanic community. Hispanic Federation provides grants and services to a broad network of Latino non-profit agencies serving the most vulnerable members of the Hispanic community and advocates nationally with respect to the vital issues of education, health, immigration, economic empowerment, civic engagement and the environment.

Hispanic Federation Connecticut Member Agencies:

Hispanic Health Council

Contact: Jose Ortiz, President & CEO joseo@hispanichealth.com (860) 527-0856 Hispanic Health Council is an organization based in Hartford, CT whose mission is to improve the health and social well being of Latinos and other diverse communities via community based research, evidence based direct services, training and policy advocacy.

Latino Community Services, Inc.

Contact: Fernando Morales, Executive Director fmorales@lcs-ct.org (860) 296-6400 Our mission: To reduce the further spread of HIV/AIDS among the Latino Community and other populations at risk and improve the quality of life and health outcomes of individuals affected by HIV/AIDS.

Spanish Community of Wallingford

Contact: Maria Fernanda Harlow, Executive Director mharlow@scow.org (203) 294-2256 Spanish Community Center of Wallingford (SCOW) is a social service organization committed to responding to the needs of the Latino Community by assisting them to succeed in U.S. society, and to enable Latinos to maintain and share their rich varied cultures with the broader community through social service guidance, educational opportunities and cultural sharing.

Spanish American Merchants Association

Contact: Julio Mendoza, Executive Director julio_mendoza@samact.org (860) 278-5825 SAMA is a non-profit organization incorporated in the State of Connecticut to serve as a vehicle for the economic growth of business. SAMA was created to assist business people, in particular, Latinos, to acquire a better understating of economic principles.

San Juan Center

Contact: Fernando Betancourt, Executive Director f_bentacourt96@yahoo.com (860) 522-2205 San Juan Center is an individual and family Social Services organization in Hartford, CT providing counseling services to families, housing to low-income elderly and youth development activities.

Center For Latino Progress

Contact Yanil Teron, Executive Director yanil_teron@ctprf.org (860) 247-3227 Center's mission is to advance the social and economic conditions of the community at large, with emphasis on Hispanics, through education, training, supportive services, leadership development and advocacy.

Hispanic Center of Greater Danbury, Inc.

Contact: Andrea Contreras, Executive Director andrea@danburycentro.com (203) 798-2855 Mission is to serve, educate and advocate for Latino and other ethnic communities by facilitating community planning, mobility programs and creating community opportunities that foster social and cultural interaction. eliminating language barriers, creating citizenship and civic participation opportunities, providing health and well-being.

South Norwalk Community Center

Contact: Kelly Robertson, Executive Director mforero@sonocc.org (203) 899-2485 South Norwalk Community Center (SONOCC) meets the educational counseling, vocational, employment, emotional, cultural and recreational needs of economically dis-advantaged people and minority groups so that they become self sufficient. The center carries its mission by offering a number of services inclusive of but not limited to, licensed summer camp program, Youth tutoring; health, nutrition and counseling services; senior center programs, job development services, and adult education.

ARTE, Inc. Contact: David Greco, Executive Director dsgreco@sbcglobal.net (203) 469- 4536 Arte, Inc., is dedicated to promoting Latino art, culture and talent. Arte establishes partnerships with community agencies and groups to improve the quality of life of residents. Arte assists Latino artists; organize programs, events, shows and exhibits. Arte develops and runs effective youth programming to engage children and mold better citizens.

Junta for Progressive Action

Contact: Sandra Treviño, Executive Director Sandra.trevino@juntainc.org (203) 787-0191 Mission is to provide services, programs and advocacy that improve the social, political and economic conditions of the Latino community in greater New Haven while nurturing and promoting its cultural traditions as it builds bridges with other communities.

Bridgeport Caribe Youth Leaders (BCYL)

Contact: John Torres, Executive Director jtorres@bcyl.org (203) 913-0073 The mission of BCYL is to provide youth with diverse sports, educational and community awareness programs that foster physical, intellectual and social development, while instilling pride and helping them build character and self-esteem, so that they can reach their full potential and value their role in society.

Connecticut Students for a Dream

Contact: Lucas Codognolla, Executive Director Lucas@ct4adream.org (203) 391-1626 C4D's work is focused in creating social change and addressing the root causes of injustice and inequity in the lives of our members and communities.

Spanish Speaking Center of New Britain

Contact: Mary Sanders, Executive Director marymaryssc@yahoo.com (860) 224-2651 Faith-based community organization serving low and moderate-income families in the New Britain area. Social Services, Adult Education and Career Development, High School Youth programming, Community Food Pantry, Voter Registration and Civic Engagement, Community & Legislative Advocacy.