

STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
LATINO AND PUERTO RICAN  
AFFAIRS COMMISSION

Excerpt of the Latino and Puerto Rican  
Affairs Commission Monthly Meeting

May 21, 2014

H e l d   B e f o r e :

RICHARD A. CRUZ,  
Chairperson

1 A p p e a r a n c e s:

2 For the Commission:

3 EMANUELA PALMARES-LEAF, Secretary

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7 DR. EUGENE M. SALORIO, Commissioner

8 PABLO SOTO, Commissioner

9 FENY TAYLOR, Commissioner

10 DANNY TORRES, Commissioner

11

12 For the Connecticut Association for Human  
13 Services:

14 JIM HORAN

15

16 For Eastern Connecticut State  
17 University:

18 DR. ELSA NUNEZ, President

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20 For Central Connecticut State University:

21 AWILDA REASCO, Director

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A p p e a r a n c e s:  
For the Connecticut Association of  
Latinos in Higher Education:  
MYRNA GARCIA BOWEN, President

1 THE CHAIRPERSON: Today we  
2 have several experts on the field of  
3 education that so graciously accepted our  
4 invitation to discuss remedial education  
5 reform in Connecticut and its effects on  
6 Latino students.

7 This topic is extremely  
8 important because, as the state now moves to  
9 implement PA 12-40, we, as a commission, need  
10 to ensure that the -- the success rates of  
11 our students improve so that our student  
12 generation can make economic gains for their  
13 families and to our state.

14 We are confident that this  
15 discussion will be extremely informative.  
16 And if that can be -- that can also mean  
17 additional amendments or other public policy  
18 recommendations that lie directly in the  
19 realm of our mandate.

20 We have four speakers here  
21 this evening. Each speaker will have a total  
22 of ten minutes to make their presentation,  
23 with about five minutes Q & A.

24 Finally, I ask that each  
25 speaker briefly introduce themselves for the

1 record and press the button in front of you.

2 MR. HORAN: Yes. I am Jim  
3 Horan with the Connecticut Association for  
4 Human Services.

5 THE CHAIRPERSON: Okay.

6 And --

7 MS. REASCO: Hi. My name is  
8 Awilda Reasco. I direct pre-college programs  
9 at CCSU.

10 MS. NUNEZ: Elsa Nunez,  
11 Eastern Connecticut State University.

12 MS. BOWEN: Myrna Garcia  
13 Bowen, CALAHE, Connecticut Association of  
14 Latinos in Higher Education.

15 THE CHAIRPERSON: Thank you.

16 Our first speaker is Jim Horan  
17 who serves as executive director of the  
18 Connecticut Association for Human Services  
19 since 2001. They have -- they had focused  
20 its advocacy research and outreach under the  
21 umbrella of family economic success during  
22 Jim's tenure.

23 While continuing its long-time  
24 commitment to improving care in education,  
25 health, and access to nutrition and other

1 basic needs, through Jim's leadership, CHAS  
2 has bolstered its advocacy efforts at the  
3 state capitol and increasingly, in  
4 Washington, built strong coalitions among  
5 advocates and providers, and fostered best  
6 practices that move low-income children and  
7 families towards self -- economic  
8 self-sufficiency.

9 Jim.

10 MR. HORAN: Thanks very much  
11 for the opportunity to present here today.

12 The Connecticut Association  
13 for Human Services has been focused on the --  
14 the work of community colleges over the last  
15 five or six years, and we recently released  
16 our third report on this topic, which I'll be  
17 talking about today and which you have before  
18 you, "Developmental Education Reform -  
19 Insuring Success for All in Connecticut."

20 And the reason why we focused  
21 on the community colleges is because,  
22 traditionally, they are the stepping stone  
23 for low-income people, especially people of  
24 color, to be able to move up educationally  
25 and economically, so that has been a real

1 focus of our attention over the last several  
2 years.

3 The report's author is Roger  
4 Senserrich. He's in Spain on vacation and is  
5 unable to be here today, but I'm really happy  
6 to have the opportunity to present to you and  
7 really pleased that the Latino and Puerto  
8 Rican Affairs Commission is looking at this  
9 topic because it really is critical.

10 (Indiscernible.)

11 THE CHAIRPERSON: There's a --  
12 is that the clicker on top?

13 MR. HORAN: Oh, yeah. Oh,  
14 there we go. Sorry. My -- my mistake. I  
15 haven't done this before. Okay.

16 So a little overview on  
17 remedial education.

18 There's a great need for  
19 remedial education in Connecticut. And our  
20 report calls it "developmental education."  
21 But just to be clear, developmental and  
22 remedial are -- are the same for our  
23 purposes.

24 The system that has been in  
25 place is not working, as we'll discuss in

1 more detail. Public Act 1240 was passed in  
2 2012 to change the system. It created three  
3 tiers of remedial education: embedded,  
4 intensive and transitional.

5           There are considerations and  
6 things to look at for each of these. For  
7 CAHS, we have focused on the third or lowest  
8 tier, which is called "transitional  
9 education," because that is for students who  
10 are the lowest performing, generally below  
11 eighth-grade level in reading, writing or  
12 math.

13           And we focused on this -- we  
14 focused attention on this group, both  
15 administratively, working with the Board of  
16 Regents in the community colleges, as well as  
17 legislatively back in 2012 and 2013, and  
18 again, this past legislative session.

19           So I said that the remedial  
20 education system that was in place was not  
21 working, that only 8 percent of students who  
22 needed remedial education earned a credential  
23 in three years. Eight percent, it's -- it's  
24 astounding really when you learn the -- the  
25 numbers.

1           The -- furthermore, less than  
2 half of students who were assigned to  
3 remedial education in math, in 2007, passed  
4 the class. So right off the bat, students  
5 that come in and take remedial education are  
6 often not succeeding. They're not getting  
7 past the remedial education classes. What  
8 happens is they end up spending all their  
9 time stuck in remedial education. They use  
10 up their Pell Grants. They sometimes use  
11 some of their own money, and certainly, the  
12 time and effort that they put into it. And  
13 then, they often have nothing to show for it  
14 because they don't get beyond the -- the  
15 remedial classes to earn credit-bearing  
16 classes, let alone earn a credential or a  
17 degree.

18           And just to look at -- at some  
19 of the numbers here, two-thirds of students  
20 who attend community colleges in Connecticut  
21 and nationally are assigned to remedial  
22 education classes. In Connecticut, after  
23 three years, less than, as I said, 8 percent  
24 of students overall, and it's also 8 percent  
25 of Hispanics students, had earned a degree or

1 a credential. And more than half of students  
2 after three years, for Hispanics and Blacks,  
3 had dropped out. So that's the -- the bar on  
4 the right. So, clearly, the system that has  
5 been in place is not working well.

6 Interestingly, a lot of times  
7 when we think about community college  
8 students or college students generally, we  
9 think of students coming right out of high  
10 schools. And they are the largest single  
11 group, about 45 percent of students, enrolled  
12 in community colleges are under the age of  
13 22, but they are not the majority of students  
14 overall.

15 So many community college  
16 students are working adults. Many have  
17 families. So it really is a struggle for  
18 them to both go to school and take care of  
19 their families, earn money at the same time.

20 Again, a little more detail  
21 about the outcomes for students. The best  
22 results are for the oldest students, the 50  
23 and over group, at the -- the right end of  
24 the -- the scale. They're the ones that are  
25 most likely to -- to graduate. But the ones

1 that are least likely to graduate are the  
2 largest cohorts, in this chart, those that  
3 are ages 17 to 19, ages 20 to 24.

4 Now, our belief, at the  
5 Connecticut Association for Human Services,  
6 is not that every student necessarily has to  
7 earn a college degree, whether it's an  
8 associates degree or a -- a four-year degree.  
9 But if they don't even earn a credential, the  
10 likelihood that they're going to earn enough  
11 money to be able to support themselves and  
12 their families is actually pretty slim in  
13 today's economy.

14 We know that there's a lot of  
15 service jobs out there that are quite low  
16 wage. But if you want to get any other kind  
17 of job in today's economy, and often, even  
18 those service jobs, you need to have a  
19 credential or a degree.

20 So looking at the -- the  
21 reform, there's three tiers. This is  
22 basically just saying that a lot of times  
23 when you hear about what's going on, it's not  
24 the real story that people are most  
25 interested in. And this is a little cartoon

1 about what's on a college -- a university  
2 website and what people are really looking  
3 for when they go there, so I'm going to try  
4 to deal with what people are really  
5 interested in.

6 The building blocks, the  
7 elements of PA 12-40, first placement reform,  
8 that means where students are placed, how  
9 they're placed into remedial education.

10 Beginning with PA 12-40, there  
11 have to be at least two measures used. So in  
12 the past, generally, it's just been the  
13 ACCUPLACER test. And however students faired  
14 on the ACCUPLACER test meant whether they  
15 were assigned to remedial education or not,  
16 even though that's not necessarily a great  
17 indicator.

18 I was just talking with Dr.  
19 Nunez coming in, and she was saying sometimes  
20 when you interview somebody for a job, they  
21 can bomb in a job but they can be terrific or  
22 vice versa.

23 The same type of thing with  
24 the ACCUPLACER. It can look like a person  
25 needs remedial education because they didn't

1 do well on that single test, but it may, in  
2 fact, turn out that they don't actually need  
3 remedial education. So with PA 12-40,  
4 there's going to be at least two measures  
5 that will determine how a student is placed.

6 The second major element is  
7 that it limits noncredit-bearing, remedial  
8 education classes to one semester, six  
9 months, separate classes for English and  
10 math, but it's only supposed to be one  
11 semester.

12 That was just clarified in the  
13 past legislative session to say, that if it's  
14 the policy of the higher education  
15 institution to allow a student to repeat the  
16 class, they may do so. Which is really  
17 important because there's been a big concern,  
18 that if a student failed after one semester  
19 of remedial education, they were out. And  
20 that's not the intention of the legislation.  
21 And that is, in fact, not the way that it's  
22 being implemented. And, I think, others on  
23 the panel can comment in more detail about  
24 that.

25 The third major element of PA

1 12-40 is that there are three tiers for  
2 developmental education. The first is  
3 embedded remedial education which offers  
4 credit-bearing classes with the remedial  
5 education built in. About, I believe, it's  
6 about a third of students are now assigned to  
7 the embedded remedial ed, intensive remedial  
8 education for about half of the students  
9 take. That's the traditional remedial  
10 education that people think of, which are  
11 intensive, one-semester courses.

12           And then, the transitional, as  
13 I said, these are for the students who are  
14 least prepared, generally below eighth-grade  
15 level in reading and/or math, and they are  
16 not actually admitted to the community  
17 colleges but are taking remediation either  
18 offered by the community colleges or outside  
19 of community colleges.

20           As I said, the students in  
21 transitional programs are not actually  
22 enrolled in college courses. They're also  
23 not using financial aid or Pell grants which  
24 is really critical, because as I said, that's  
25 where many students were getting stuck, and

1 that was a huge problem.

2           The community colleges can  
3 partner with adult education systems. And  
4 there is money in this past legislative  
5 session allocated to adult-ed programs to  
6 make sure that they get involved, which we  
7 think is a -- is a big improvement and very  
8 important.

9           Community colleges have  
10 flexibility on how they implement these --  
11 these transitional programs. The legislation  
12 passed in 2012 said that they had to go full  
13 throttle and fully implement in the fall of  
14 this year, of 2014. Just this past session  
15 that recently ended, that's delayed until the  
16 fall of 2015, but the colleges can start  
17 early if they're ready.

18           And we really hope they will  
19 because the colleges have been working hard  
20 on this, and we don't want the reform  
21 delayed. We think it's important to have the  
22 reform, and we prefer that they go forward.

23           The Board of Regents is  
24 providing the oversight for these  
25 transitional programs. They're collecting

1 data, looking at performance indicators,  
2 making sure that best practices are shared  
3 among the community colleges and also the --  
4 the CSU system, which I haven't talked much  
5 about, and perhaps Dr. Nunez will because  
6 there's a much smaller cohort of students in  
7 the CSUs that are assigned to remedial  
8 education.

9           There are four working groups  
10 set up regionally around the state that bring  
11 together administrators, professors, and  
12 others, that are working on these best  
13 practices and the information --  
14 implementation of PA 12-40. And there's an  
15 external evaluator that is being hired by the  
16 Board of Regents to evaluate and look at all  
17 the data and see what's working best, which  
18 is really critical.

19           There are a lot of issues and  
20 challenges as this goes forward, and that's  
21 why my organization and others have been  
22 looking closely at what the Board of Regents  
23 is doing, the community colleges themselves,  
24 and now we're starting to work with adult ed  
25 providers, too, on the implementation.

1           It's critical that there's a  
2 sound analysis of the initial pilots to see  
3 what's really working and what's not working  
4 because each of the colleges have been given  
5 freedom to experiment, which is terrific, but  
6 then, over time, we need the colleges to come  
7 back and implement those things that are  
8 working well and to eliminate those -- those  
9 programs that are not effective.

10           There's really only a year to  
11 do so, and that's -- well, there was a year.  
12 Now there's two years with the whole  
13 implementation required in 2015. That may  
14 not be enough time, in some ways, but it  
15 probably can eliminate those programs that  
16 don't work well at all and figure out what  
17 really is -- is working.

18           So other issues: Clarifying  
19 the placement criteria. I mentioned that  
20 it's not just the -- the ACCUPLACER anymore.  
21 There's other methods that are used. It's  
22 important to figure out which -- which of  
23 those methods are really most effective.

24           There's also a high cost for  
25 these transitional programs, so how will

1 these be paid for over time. The Legislature  
2 just allocated an additional \$10 million in  
3 funding for remedial classes, which is  
4 terrific; \$2 million for adult education  
5 providers to work with the transitional  
6 students, which we think is very good.  
7 Whether that's really enough, we don't yet  
8 know, but it's a fairly substantial  
9 allocation, and it's a good -- it's a good  
10 start.

11                   Transitioning -- other issues  
12 are the transitioning between remedial  
13 levels. As I mentioned, there's that  
14 question about what happens if the student  
15 fails a semester of intensive remedial  
16 education. Are they stuck and that's it?  
17 That's not the intention. That was clarified  
18 in this legislative session. So that -- that  
19 was a positive.

20                   We have other policy  
21 recommendations as we move forward -- sorry.  
22 One is focusing on the program evaluation.  
23 Data is critical to see what works. As I  
24 said, the state is hiring an evaluator. This  
25 other -- the contract for that is for what we

1 think is a very small amount. We're worried  
2 that that won't be a sufficient evaluation  
3 but we'll -- we'll be monitoring that to see.

4 We want to make sure that  
5 there really is access for the transitional  
6 students, that they're not going to be shut  
7 out of the community colleges, which I think  
8 is a concern to a lot of people. If they're  
9 not actually being admitted to community  
10 college, is the door being closed to the  
11 opportunity for higher education.

12 We know that's not the intent  
13 with the legislation, but we're going to be  
14 monitoring it, as a temperament, to make sure  
15 that -- that it works as the original  
16 legislative sponsor and as the Board of  
17 Regents and the community colleges intended.  
18 I already mentioned the additional funding,  
19 which we're pleased and advocated for this  
20 past session.

21 Other policy recommendations,  
22 the students who are in remedial ed need a  
23 lot of support. That traditionally has been  
24 a neglected area, to bring together cohorts  
25 of students to work with each other, to have

1 adequate counseling by staff in the schools.  
2 There's some innovative, kind of, pilot  
3 projects going on, one at Norwalk Community,  
4 that provides wrap-around supports to single  
5 moms. I believe Dr. Nunez has a program  
6 at -- at Eastern Connecticut State University  
7 that's really terrific with support services  
8 for low-performing students. And those kinds  
9 of programs and policies are -- are critical.

10 As we move forward, it's --  
11 it's very important that we adopt best  
12 practices. I-BEST is Integrated Basic  
13 Education -- excuse me -- I'm forgetting the  
14 acronym -- I'll come back to that in a  
15 minute -- but Bridges' program, Pathways'  
16 programs, there's one at Western Connecticut  
17 State University, another at Eastern, that  
18 helps students make sure that they're  
19 performing -- being integrated and working  
20 well.

21 And then, to have consistent  
22 standards and evaluations so that there's not  
23 kind of a forum shopping that students say,  
24 oh, Manchester Community College is too hard  
25 for me to get into, so I'll -- I'll go to

1 Capital. But then, what happens over time,  
2 will they perform well at Capital, will there  
3 be -- will they have a meaningful -- will  
4 they be able to earn a degree, and will that  
5 be meaningful over time. So those are the  
6 types of -- of things that we're looking at.

7 In conclusion, reform was  
8 necessary. There's a lot of questions about  
9 this reform. It moved very quickly. I was  
10 talking with Beth Bye, the senator who  
11 sponsored the original legislation, just the  
12 other day. She was saying she didn't think  
13 it would pass in the first year, but it did.  
14 And sometimes when things pass quickly,  
15 they're not as well thought out as -- as they  
16 might need to be.

17 So we've been kind of going  
18 along a bumpy road with the implementation of  
19 PA 12-40, but the reform was necessary. So  
20 we all need to do what we can to monitor it  
21 and make sure that it's implemented well, no  
22 silver bullets, no magic solutions, just a  
23 lot of work to make sure that it operates  
24 effectively.

25 Thank you. I'd be happy to

1 answer any questions that you have, but I  
2 know that there's other presenters, and you  
3 can do it however you think works best.

4 Thank you.

5 THE CHAIRPERSON: Should we go  
6 to all the speakers first and then we'll go  
7 to questions after (indiscernible)?

8 Great.

9 Our next speaker is Dr. Elsa  
10 Nunez. On May 18, 2006, Dr. Nunez was  
11 unanimously elected by the Board of Trustees  
12 of the Connecticut State University System as  
13 the 6th president of Eastern Connecticut  
14 State University. She assumed the Office of  
15 president on August 4, 2006. Dr. Nunez is  
16 the first Latino president of a Connecticut  
17 state university.

18 So, Dr. Nunez.

19 (Applause.)

20 DR. NUNEZ: Well, thank you.  
21 Oh, no, no, no. Not (indiscernible).

22 I'm here representing the  
23 Board of Regents because, as you know, two  
24 years ago I was named vice president of the  
25 system, so double job but not double salary,

1 unfortunately. They get me a stipend, and  
2 it's been in every paper, I think, in  
3 Connecticut. But I tell everybody it's not  
4 enough.

5           Anyway, it's an honor for me  
6 to be here to talk to you about something  
7 that has been my life's work. As you know, I  
8 taught English for a very long time as a  
9 professor at a state college in New Jersey  
10 and was tenured and promoted during those  
11 days. I'm an academic.

12           And so this work of  
13 remediation has been going on in American  
14 universities and colleges for about 40 years,  
15 and I've studied it very, very closely.

16           And so I want to thank you,  
17 first of all, for the volunteering that you  
18 do as commissioners because you do give up a  
19 lot of your time and, you know, your  
20 intellect and all of that to just, you know,  
21 deal with the issues that our community is  
22 facing. And today, I'm here to thank you for  
23 focusing on this issue because this issue is  
24 critical for our community. It's critical  
25 for any minority student, of course, but you

1 are focused on Hispanic students, and for  
2 that, I am grateful.

3           As I said earlier, probably  
4 I've been talking to myself for 35 of those  
5 40 years about this issue in the mirror  
6 because people were not focused. It was a  
7 machine that was operating in higher  
8 education across the country, and no one  
9 wanted to question the outcomes of the  
10 machine that was operating.

11           And there are a lot of  
12 political side conversations you can -- I can  
13 have about whether that -- why that was  
14 working. But people like Awilda Reasco and  
15 others who've been working in this area have  
16 done very good things in those 40 years, so  
17 I'm not here to criticize or to say that all  
18 of it was bad. I'm here to say that,  
19 overall, across the country, remediation was  
20 not working, and in particular, in  
21 Connecticut, it wasn't, even though some  
22 selected programs were doing very well. And  
23 that's why we can't just dismiss everything  
24 in the conversation.

25           So what has happened over the

1 time has been that the law has broken through  
2 the remediation conundrum in Connecticut, and  
3 I believe it's visionary, as I will explain,  
4 and it does show promise for success.

5 Let me set the stage for you.  
6 Across our nation, more than 60 percent of  
7 all community college students -- and Jim  
8 actually gave you very good base data -- and  
9 20 percent of all four-year students,  
10 including many graduating from high school  
11 with a 3 point GPA or higher, still needed  
12 remediation because it didn't matter what  
13 your GPA was; it mattered where you went to  
14 high school. So an English course was not an  
15 English course. You know, a statistics  
16 course may not have been a statistics course,  
17 or an algebra course was not an algebra  
18 course. It was something else that students  
19 were given, and so when they go to college,  
20 they were not achieving in mathematics or in  
21 English.

22 In some states, the figure is  
23 even higher. For example, in Texas, 90  
24 percent of all students in El Paso Community  
25 College are in remediation. Yet, taking

1 remedial courses seems to be a predictor of  
2 low success. You don't graduate from college  
3 if you're at the lowest levels of  
4 remediation, even up to the middle level.

5 Thirteen percent of all  
6 community college students who take some form  
7 of remediation ever get an associate degree  
8 within four years. The data goes out four  
9 years. And only 10 percent of those who  
10 transfer to a college like Eastern, a  
11 four-year college, ever graduate with a  
12 four-year degree. That's about 3 percent of  
13 all community colleges.

14 It's easy to blame K through  
15 12. I don't want to do that today. It's  
16 easy to say that programs are not productive.  
17 I don't want to do that today. But we do  
18 know that the cycle -- there's a cycle of  
19 poverty that people talk about. Well,  
20 there's a cycle of remediation, where people  
21 go into these courses in mathematics and  
22 English and never, ever attain the goal of  
23 getting into the college-level courses, and  
24 therefore, they're not retained and they  
25 don't graduate.

1           It is really sad for me, as  
2 a -- as a person who cares about people in  
3 our community, as it is for you, to see  
4 students eat up their financial aid. And as  
5 I say, you majored in remediation. That's  
6 what you did when you were in college. Now,  
7 you have no financial aid to be a political  
8 science major or bio major. And that's part  
9 of what -- what CAHS is -- has seen over  
10 time.

11           We've seen progress in other  
12 states that have the knowledge to -- use the  
13 knowledge to craft very different programs  
14 lately, and so Eastern has been doing some of  
15 that. And I'll talk in a minute, not about  
16 Eastern specifically, but about what the  
17 Board of Regents finally decided to do.

18           So there are several goals  
19 that the program now at the Board of Regents  
20 has in mind. The first is develop programs  
21 that allow community college students to  
22 complete their remedial course work in their  
23 first semester, so that is different.  
24 Before, you could come in, take courses, and  
25 sometime along the way finish remediation.

1 Now it forces you to take it right away in  
2 the first semester.

3 And to -- the second goal is  
4 to achieve success, and that is that students  
5 finish their remedial courses and can get  
6 into college-level courses.

7 The third goal is that there  
8 be higher persistence, retention and  
9 graduation rates so they can ultimately get  
10 into those college-level courses. And of  
11 course, we had the goal of having you placed  
12 into one of these courses, not on one  
13 measure.

14 Right now, as Jim Horan said,  
15 the -- the methodology was you took an  
16 ACCUPLACER test, you bombed it, you were in  
17 remediation for life. That was the track.  
18 Now, we have a plan with multiple measures.  
19 And the Board of Regents will consider how  
20 many multiple measures a university or  
21 college will use to put you into remediation.

22 So, in my case, I might have  
23 three multiple measures or five multiple  
24 measures. It could be my SAT scores. It  
25 could be my class grades in high school. It

1 could be how I performed in math courses in  
2 high school. It could be the ACCUPLACER, but  
3 it will not be just one test.

4 And then, of course, we took  
5 the -- the construct that existed in the  
6 Board of Regents of three levels and changed  
7 the content of each construct. And that's  
8 what Jim was talking.

9 So let me talk about -- just  
10 describe it briefly for you, because I think  
11 the -- the best part of today will be the  
12 conversation because I'm here to give you as  
13 much information as you would like.

14 So the first level, we've  
15 always had three levels, high, middle and  
16 low. We still have three levels, but let me  
17 tell you what the third -- the first level  
18 did. This information came from the  
19 University of Maryland, a guy down there, an  
20 English professor, who revolutionized the top  
21 level across the country. And Eastern copied  
22 what he did five years ago.

23 When the law -- when they were  
24 hearing testimony for the law, Eastern  
25 testified and said we have five years of data

1 on the top level. Let's show it to you. So  
2 this is the top level. The top level, Elsa  
3 comes in, takes a test, and she barely failed  
4 it. With the multiple measures, somebody  
5 says, look, Elsa shows a lot of potential  
6 here. She's just -- just below the pass  
7 mark, you know, just below. We're not going  
8 to put her into any remediation. No  
9 remediation for Elsa. She's going into  
10 college English, and we're going to give her  
11 extra time in college English, extra  
12 tutoring, extra supplemental instruction.  
13 And that's what level one is. That is called  
14 "embedded."

15 Embedded why, the name?  
16 Because you've taken the remediation and  
17 embedded it in a college level course. So  
18 while I'm in embedded English, I'm getting  
19 college credit. Financial aid is pumping  
20 away paying my bills, and I'm getting college  
21 credit, and I'm getting my remediation done.

22 The pass rate at Eastern for  
23 those students over five years was 95  
24 percent. So no one can argue with me that  
25 embedded remediation will not work for the

1 top level. So a third -- and a third of the  
2 students are at the top and the bottom.

3 So you -- now you go to the  
4 middle level, which Jim described, and used  
5 the term "intensive." So some people are  
6 using the term "boot camp." And I don't like  
7 that term, but it does give you an idea. So  
8 we have now a student that doesn't fail at  
9 the top, or is not at that top level but is  
10 somewhere in the middle. They know some  
11 English or they've developed their English  
12 skills to a certain extent. They know some  
13 mathematics, but they're not at the top.  
14 Those students will get what the law allows  
15 for one semester of remediation.

16 However, what's important is,  
17 if they fail it, they can repeat it as many  
18 times as the institution allows. So if  
19 you're at Central, where Myrna is, and they  
20 fail it, and her policy is you can pass it,  
21 you can take it two times, three times,  
22 whatever it is, that's what will happen. So  
23 the rumors that you take it one time and then  
24 you're thrown out are not true.

25 Also, the -- the intensive --

1 that intensive experience can be given to you  
2 in the summer. It can be given to you in the  
3 semester. It can be given to you in three  
4 weeks, in four weeks. It can be given to you  
5 in different modalities. And that's really  
6 important for you to note. Financial aid  
7 pays for intensive. So those are the first  
8 two levels.

9           The issues, the political  
10 issues are around the lowest level. We've  
11 called that "transitional" because it's --  
12 it's demeaning to call it the lowest level.  
13 You say to people, oh, you're in the lowest  
14 level. So we say you're in the transitional  
15 level. That means you're making the  
16 transition to college. That's what that  
17 means. You're -- you're getting the college  
18 skills that you don't have, and you're  
19 transitioning to college. So the bottom  
20 level, I would ask you to call transitional.

21           This is the problem with  
22 transitional. If you are what we call  
23 "triple remedial," that means you -- you  
24 don't do well, you can't decode reading, you  
25 cannot write a coherent paragraph, and you

1 can't do arithmetic, you will never, ever  
2 graduate from college in this country. The  
3 odds are totally against you. The -- the  
4 data across the country is very, very  
5 compelling.

6 And so these people that are  
7 in transitional level are the neediest people  
8 in our state in terms of remediation. And  
9 they are the people who ate up all their  
10 remedial -- ate up all their financial aid  
11 taking remedial course after remedial course.

12 So what we did was turn this  
13 right on its head, no financial aid, the  
14 state said. That was the law. You cannot  
15 use financial aid for that level. It's --  
16 you can't get -- you can't get credit for  
17 that level. It doesn't qualify for the  
18 federal government to give you financial aid.  
19 So what does the system say, let's not accept  
20 them? We can't do that. We need the bodies.

21 Look at our enrollments. Our  
22 enrollments are -- are plummeting because the  
23 demographics are changing. So these 12  
24 community colleges need every single person  
25 in Connecticut to go to college. They're not

1 going to turn away anybody. So what they  
2 said was we're going to give it to you for  
3 free.

4 So the people that are passing  
5 the rumors that we're tanking these people  
6 and that these people are get -- no. Instead  
7 of using financial aid, they're going to get  
8 all the instruction for free. But it's not  
9 courses, it's instruction. So this is the  
10 beauty of Level 3.

11 First of all, we teach  
12 Philosophy 100, Psychology 100, Physics 100,  
13 the same exact way, 16 weeks, twice a week  
14 you meet for a semester. Right? That's the  
15 way you went to college. That's the way it  
16 was. Sometimes it's once a week depending on  
17 the hours, but mostly that was the structure.

18 In Level 3, there is no  
19 semester structure. So if Elsa goes to  
20 Tunxis Community College, and I go in  
21 September, I could be finished with Level 3  
22 by October, because the instruction is not  
23 course-bound. There's no course. I go in  
24 and I get workshops from faculty and from  
25 supplemental instruction from tutors and from

1 whoever is hired to help me learn the  
2 mathematics and the English. So that is what  
3 Jim was referring to, that these colleges are  
4 using different models.

5           Some colleges are using a  
6 three-week model. Some colleges are using a  
7 six-week model. Some colleges are using a  
8 one-week model where you go all day and all  
9 night. One of the most important models that  
10 we have out there is that you go for three  
11 weeks, four days a week, Monday, Tuesday,  
12 Wednesday and Thursday. And if you miss any  
13 of those days, then you can make it up on  
14 Friday. And so that's very creative. We've  
15 never had an opportunity where an adult or a  
16 person in Level 3 could actually go fast.

17           So the data is not complete.  
18 And I think Jim made an excellent point,  
19 which is that's where the rubber meets the  
20 road. We have to collect the data on all  
21 three levels and make sure that we are  
22 producing the results that we think we're  
23 going to produce.

24           But I will tell you this, so  
25 far, on Level 3 -- a professor from Houstonic

1 Community College teaches mathematics. And  
2 he said to me, Elsa, this is  
3 counterintuitive. I always taught prealgebra  
4 in one semester, 16 weeks. I just taught it  
5 in three and my pass rate is higher. Why,  
6 because the students want to get the hell out  
7 of pre -- they are motivated, more motivated,  
8 because they see they're not paying tuition  
9 for it. They're not using up their financial  
10 aid. They can get out of that and get into  
11 the next college-level course.

12 So all of this discussion  
13 about the law has been very healthy, I think.  
14 I think that the -- the changes in three  
15 levels is very good. But I do think that the  
16 commission has to pay very close to attention  
17 to the data on the three levels. And when  
18 you're convinced that the results are  
19 compelling, and that will be in five years  
20 because you can't -- you have to see the  
21 trend, then I think you can say the system  
22 succeeded. If it doesn't succeed, you need  
23 to call us on it.

24 Thank you.

25 THE CHAIRPERSON: Our next

1 speaker is Awilda Reasco, who serves as  
2 director of the Pre-Collegiate and Access  
3 Services of Central Connecticut State  
4 University.

5 She was the first Hispanic  
6 woman to serve as site coordinator of  
7 Connecticut Collegiate Awareness Preparation  
8 Program. In addition to her professional  
9 accomplishments, she serves as adviser to the  
10 Latino Association Student Organization, and  
11 was the first Hispanic woman to become  
12 moderator to register voters in the City of  
13 New Britain.

14 She is a former board member  
15 of (indiscernible).

16 MS. REASCO: Okay. Well,  
17 thank you.

18 (Applause.)

19 MS. REASCO: Thank you.

20 I have to start sharing with  
21 all of you is that when I was given a grant  
22 27 years ago, which was in 1987, the  
23 Connecticut Collegiate Awareness and  
24 Preparation Program, known as ConnCAP, you  
25 know, Peter Rosa comes into my mind because

1 he named the program. He said, you know --  
2 and he says -- and he supported the  
3 department. Back then, he was in -- in the  
4 Department of Higher Education. And he -- he  
5 said we need a program like this in New  
6 Britain, a ConnCAP program. And I'm going to  
7 tell you about the ConnCAP program in a few  
8 minutes.

9                   But it -- it's similar to what  
10 Elsa talked about, the Maryland program and  
11 then she brought it to Eastern. But I --  
12 this -- it's -- now we bring it into the  
13 eighth-grade level. Okay. And -- and I'm  
14 going to walk you through that in a few  
15 minutes.

16                   Before I walk you through the  
17 ConnCAP program, I've been at Central for 27  
18 years. And -- and -- because ConnCAP,  
19 I've -- I've shadowed it, and I started very  
20 young working with the program, I was able to  
21 assess and look at the progress of students.  
22 And over 70 percent of our students are  
23 Latinos in the ConnCAP program. And it's  
24 funded in the New Britain area, and it's  
25 funded through Department of Higher Ed.

1           So New Britain is where I was  
2 raised. I was born in Puerto Rico, but I was  
3 raised in New Britain. And I believed in  
4 education because this is what got me to  
5 where I am now because, again, you know, I  
6 mean we all -- we all have our -- our own  
7 stories -- is that -- you know, being first  
8 generation, single mom, et cetera, low  
9 income, it kind of brings you back home where  
10 you want to give back to your community,  
11 especially to the Latinos.

12           In addition to that, I was a  
13 product of these programs back in the early  
14 eighties. So I'm able to look at myself and  
15 say, wow, I was a product, how the program  
16 impacted me, and how -- and -- you know, and  
17 how have I developed, and what am I going to  
18 give back to the City of New Britain and  
19 working -- working at Central Connecticut  
20 State University since 1987.

21           So I want to walk you through  
22 ConnCAP. Again, I was a graduate from UConn  
23 back in 1980 -- '84 I want to say, '85. This  
24 grant was given to me. It was said we're  
25 going to trust you with this grant. You're

1 going to go to the schools in New Britain and  
2 our goal is -- is to prepare students to go  
3 to college. I was just told that. Your goal  
4 is to prepare students to go to college.

5 And I -- what I did was I got  
6 the -- you know, obviously, the Board of --  
7 of New Britain involved. I've got the -- I  
8 -- you know the principals. I've involved  
9 churches. I did involve a lot of nonprofit  
10 agencies. I still have good memories of lots  
11 of people who were very instrumental. And I  
12 said our goal is -- is to get our students to  
13 graduate from college. I didn't say graduate  
14 from high school. I said college.

15 So the magic word is right,  
16 and I'm sure all of us would agree, is high  
17 expectations, okay, high expectations. And  
18 because, throughout my 27 years, I've -- I've  
19 dealt and I've encountered a 14-year-old kid  
20 that finishes eighth grade, comes in, may  
21 have maybe one parent, maybe lives with an  
22 abuelo, (indiscernible), okay, and that  
23 student now can advocate on behalf of himself  
24 and say I graduated from college.

25 Why? Because we -- actually

1 this is what we did. We asked the school to  
2 give us a -- a study hall so we -- we wanted  
3 to create a curriculum, study skills, for  
4 incoming ninth graders. We -- we provide  
5 study skills, time management, ways to study,  
6 okay, critical thinkers, okay,  
7 self-responsible, independent, okay, despite  
8 of whatever is going on at home, because we  
9 did -- we do run monthly parent meetings  
10 at -- at the campus. And we have over 80  
11 percent of our parents come to our parent  
12 meetings for the past 27 years. And trust  
13 me, I'm speaking because I've been with this  
14 program for 27 years.

15           The fruit of this is that  
16 students are able to see that, you know, we  
17 shift the way they think, the way they  
18 behave, their attitudes. We bring them on a  
19 college campus for six weeks, eighth grade.

20           Ten years ago they said,  
21 Awilda, what are you bringing eighth graders  
22 into a six-week program with high schools. I  
23 said I want to bring these kids in. We've  
24 got to start. I'd love to bring them in at  
25 elementary. And knowing that 70 -- 70

1 percent of them were Latinos, how many of us  
2 here were exposed at the seventh grade into a  
3 college campus? I know I wasn't. I was too  
4 busy making sure that my household was  
5 together. Okay? I had responsibilities at  
6 home as -- as a Puerto Rican young lady.

7 So, therefore, I -- we knew --  
8 we knew that there were cultural issues. We  
9 knew that we had to work with the parents, or  
10 whoever they lived with, the guardians, et  
11 cetera. So we were able to work that  
12 closely.

13 Let's talk about the  
14 curriculum. In the summer, what we do is I  
15 look at the New Britain school district  
16 curriculum, okay. And now, because with  
17 Common Core, which we didn't talk about,  
18 okay, I always try to incorporate what the  
19 school is going -- should be teaching that  
20 child, okay, based on those skills that that  
21 child is bringing in. And we get them up to  
22 par for the ninth grade -- when -- their next  
23 grade when they go back to eighth, ninth,  
24 tenth, eleventh and twelfth grade. That's  
25 what we do, okay.

1                   And trust me. You're going to  
2 say these kids get up -- these -- these  
3 thirteen, fourteen-year-old kids get up at  
4 7:15 in the morning. They get on a bus to  
5 come to Central for summer program? They  
6 sure do. They have no -- they have nothing  
7 else to do in New Britain. There isn't a  
8 lot -- there isn't much for them. Okay.  
9 Plus they can't be employed. They're not  
10 over 16.

11                   So, again, you know, we had  
12 110 students last year attend from the ages  
13 of grades eight to twelve into the summer  
14 program. Our students, once they go back to  
15 high school, this is what we do. We offer  
16 our juniors and seniors on campus, we offer  
17 them the Math 099 and the English 099.  
18 You're probably saying eleventh grade,  
19 twelfth grade?

20                   And what we do is, I know for  
21 some of them, it may -- they may be ahead of  
22 the ballgame, so we do have small groups in  
23 the classroom. Because when they go back to  
24 New Britain High School, for those of you  
25 that know about New Britain, New Britain is

1 the only public high school, over 3,000  
2 students, my dear friends, okay, and there  
3 are -- there are over 30 kids in a classroom.  
4 Okay.

5 My daughter went to New  
6 Britain High School. So I -- I was also a  
7 parent there. So -- so to -- let's picture  
8 this. So we try to minimize -- we try to --  
9 between 10 to 15 students in a classroom in  
10 the summer, and we test them, okay, and, you  
11 know, they -- it's fun. We don't make it so  
12 it's a lot of hands on, a lot of technology,  
13 okay. Things happen outside in -- in the  
14 center of campus, et cetera, et cetera, so we  
15 know their -- their levels and their -- and  
16 their skills.

17 The curriculum is designed  
18 around the -- the assessments of the  
19 teachers, their grades, their report cards,  
20 any assessments that we collect from the  
21 schools, because we have access to power  
22 school. Power school means that we can look  
23 into the system to see how Maria is doing  
24 today, what is her level, what -- you know  
25 what was her PSAT scores, what was her ACT

1 score, et cetera.

2 So we -- we use all those  
3 assessments back to -- like Elsa had  
4 mentioned, there may be three, four  
5 assessments that we utilize, but we try to  
6 work with the student to get -- get them up  
7 to par.

8 To make a long story short, my  
9 dear friends, graduation, over 100 percent of  
10 our students graduate from high school from  
11 this core of, you know -- in Connecticut,  
12 they can all go to any institution, any  
13 college they choose after graduation. Okay.

14 And our ConnCAP, with the  
15 state of -- of Higher Education, we have over  
16 90 percent of our students graduate from  
17 higher education, colleges, when they -- when  
18 they graduate from, like I said, high --  
19 colleges.

20 Now there is a lot of  
21 involvement. Okay. You know, we talk about  
22 being intrusive with -- with the students. I  
23 describe it as being interested in the  
24 students. We have to be interested in the  
25 students, first of all, okay, because they

1 come with -- they come with a lot of  
2 struggles. They come with a lot of --  
3 someone said -- Jim said, okay, some of them  
4 are trying to make ends meet. A fifteen,  
5 sixteen-year-old kid I have has maybe two  
6 jobs and -- and -- through high school, so  
7 we've got to get them, him or her, to go to  
8 mentoring, okay, tutoring.

9 Part of the program is -- is  
10 that we offer labs. We do -- we enhance the  
11 work we do in the morning, and we have labs  
12 in the afternoon. We repeat the English, the  
13 math, and the writing over and over again,  
14 because you know it takes practice. It takes  
15 practice for a student to be able to -- to  
16 grab, especially math, which is -- which is a  
17 -- a major concern in our area.

18 The success of our program is  
19 because we do hire college students, okay,  
20 and we try to hire Latino college students,  
21 African-American students. But if -- and  
22 what happens is they become the role models.  
23 And -- and I hire students who have a 2.7,  
24 maybe 3. and over, okay, who are good in  
25 math, reading and writing, okay, and they can

1 tutor them in the classroom. And they can  
2 take them anywhere they want, and even in the  
3 math lab at -- at Central. And they can say,  
4 you know what, this is where you're going to  
5 be, you know, maybe five years from now.  
6 You're going to be sitting in a classroom  
7 that looks like this.

8           So there's a lot of interest,  
9 like I said earlier, that -- that our -- our  
10 staff takes part in making sure that our  
11 students are ready when they go back to their  
12 middle and high school.

13           We have six middle schools in  
14 New Britain, and we have one public high  
15 school. So we have a site coordinator, who  
16 is Latino, who goes into the middle schools,  
17 after school, and works with the students.

18           We bring the students, the  
19 eighth graders, every Wednesday, once a  
20 month, on campus. And they spend four hours  
21 on campus. Okay. They navigate the system.  
22 They -- they meet admissions reps. They --  
23 Myrna has come and talked to the parents  
24 about transfer and what it is to be -- to --  
25 to go into a community college or how to read

1 a -- articulate a transcript. I mean Myrna  
2 has walked them through so many steps, the  
3 parents.

4 So there's a lot of things  
5 that go on that have helped us. You know,  
6 you have to help, the ConnCAP program, that  
7 our students succeed and it's because it's  
8 the support that we get from, again, from the  
9 institution.

10 Now, we do get in-kind funds  
11 from the University in order to enhance the  
12 ConnCAP program. And I -- I'd like to see  
13 where, maybe ten years, from now we can go  
14 bring it to -- down to the elementary level.  
15 Because now, when we think about eighth  
16 grade, our kids now need more of the  
17 academics now at elementary. Because when we  
18 get them in sixth and seventh grade,  
19 they're -- and I look at those -- the Mastery  
20 test scores --

21 A VOICE: (Indiscernible).

22 MS. REASCO: Yes.

23 So I'd love to see the  
24 program -- the ConnCAP program go back to the  
25 elementary school system. Yes, Yes.

1 A VOICE: (Indiscernible).

2 MS. REASCO: Yes, okay. I am.  
3 And the time -- and my time is up, so I will  
4 entertain questions. Yes.

5 Thank you.

6 THE CHAIRPERSON: Thank you so  
7 much for that.

8 For our next speaker, we have  
9 Myrna Garcia-Bowen, president of the  
10 Connecticut Association of Latinos in Higher  
11 Education. You all know it as CALAHE. The  
12 organization is dedicated to promoting and  
13 advocating full access, retention, and  
14 participation of Latinos and Latinas  
15 throughout Connecticut in higher education.

16 Mrs. Bowen is currently  
17 director of Academic Articulations and  
18 Partnerships at Central Conn.

19 Myrna.

20 MS. GARCIA-BOWEN: Thank you.  
21 Excuse me.

22 I, too, want to talk a little  
23 bit about my history with CALAHE. Because  
24 it's no mistake I'm here today representing  
25 CALAHE as an organization back in 1983 -- and

1 I hate doing this because I date myself.

2 That's right, I started at 16.

3 A VOICE: (Indiscernible.)

4 MS. GARCIA-BOWEN: But back in  
5 1982, I was employed by Eastern Connecticut  
6 State University in the office of recruitment  
7 and admissions. And it was the president  
8 back then -- and many of you might know, Dr.  
9 Rosa Cassada (phonetic), who was a leader in  
10 our community. She was very much an educator  
11 everywhere she went. And I owe my  
12 introduction, not only to Rosa Cassada,  
13 because she said you will be on the board,  
14 but also to one of your representatives here,  
15 Yolanda Castillo, who was with the founding  
16 fathers of CALAHE back in the day. So I'm  
17 dating you, too, so I apologize for that. So  
18 I do go back a long way.

19 And, of course, having worked  
20 since 1982 in higher education, and here I am  
21 still in higher education, CALAHE's mission  
22 and vision was very near and dear to my heart  
23 because I, too, am a first generation college  
24 Latina student, and I also graduated from the  
25 Connecticut public higher education system,

1 so I believe in it because I lived it.

2 So when Awilda says all these  
3 great programs that we're having at the high  
4 school, I never had that. So we had to  
5 really, really put our best foot forward in  
6 order to be successful.

7 I also wanted to mention my  
8 comment today will echo -- of course, I'm  
9 representing CALAHE -- so they'll echo a lot  
10 of the questions that were raised by our  
11 membership, that Jim has alluded to in his  
12 presentation.

13 So for the members of the  
14 Commission, I want to thank you for having me  
15 here today to talk on behalf of CALAHE and  
16 in -- and in this discussion that's so near  
17 and dear to my heart, as I mentioned.

18 I want to introduce CALAHE to  
19 you. We are -- we have been in existence  
20 since 1978. And our mission, as has been  
21 indicated, is dedicated to promoting and  
22 advocating for access, retention,  
23 participation of Latinos/Latinas throughout  
24 Connecticut higher education.

25 We are the only nonprofit

1 Latino organization that focuses primarily on  
2 higher education. We regularly monitor and  
3 evaluate policies that will impact Latino  
4 communities in Connecticut.

5 Its Board is made up of  
6 volunteers. All of us have our full-time  
7 jobs, and in addition to -- to our jobs, we  
8 dedicate a lot of time and energy because  
9 it's a labor of love for many of my Board  
10 members who are, by the way -- they all have  
11 jobs in higher education. And we do have --  
12 we have expanded to nonprofit organizations  
13 that do work with education.

14 So let me tell you how we got  
15 involved with this whole PA 12-40  
16 legislation. In June of 2013, CALAHE hosted  
17 our annual meeting. The primary focus of  
18 this meeting was to discuss potential  
19 implications of the PA 12-40 legislation and  
20 what it means for Latinos in higher  
21 education, both professionals and students.

22 Several concerns were raised  
23 around the impact such a bill would have on  
24 students, but particularly the Latinos.  
25 CALAHE also consulted with a few Legislators

1 to ask if they would be willing to at least  
2 consider championing desired substitute  
3 language for the PA 12-40. And again, all of  
4 this was done not knowing the outcome.

5 In April of 2014, CALAHE  
6 submitted a letter to the Appropriations  
7 Committee -- Commission -- I'm sorry --  
8 outlining the concerns from our constituency  
9 as it relates to PA 12-40.

10 Based on the aforementioned,  
11 CALAHE's membership felt strongly that the  
12 legislation would adversely impact our most  
13 disenfranchised communities in Connecticut,  
14 particularly Latinos, African-American, and  
15 white students who come from low-income  
16 backgrounds and are first in their families  
17 to go to college.

18 Connecticut's public higher  
19 education system was mandated to develop  
20 innovative ways of delivering developmental  
21 education. At the time, CALAHE's membership  
22 voiced their concerns about the implications  
23 of implementing PA 12-40, especially in  
24 community college within the time frame  
25 legislated. We, therefore, recommended that

1 the full implementation of PA 12-40 be  
2 postponed.

3 This would have allowed  
4 Connecticut public institutions the  
5 opportunity to examine the impact of newly  
6 developed delivery systems and make the  
7 necessary adjustments to ensure that full  
8 educational access for these students is not  
9 compromised.

10 We also recommended that full  
11 fiscal analysis be conducted to determine the  
12 cost of implementing PA 12-40. And this is  
13 necessary to ensure that adequate funding is  
14 available to provide academic support and  
15 services to students. Such support, we felt,  
16 was very critical for students to persist and  
17 graduate from college.

18 Lastly, we recommended forming  
19 an evaluation committee comprised of  
20 educators and developmental educational  
21 professionals. And this group of individuals  
22 could offer research-based advice and  
23 recommendations to colleges, universities,  
24 and state legislators, on the most effective  
25 methods of implementation. And as Jim had

1 mentioned, I guess that committee has already  
2 been established.

3 We are happy to hear that the  
4 full implementation of 12-40 has been  
5 postponed a year. This will allow, as we  
6 have proposed, the institutions more time to  
7 develop the most effective delivery models.

8 We are also pleased that  
9 funding has been earmarked for comprehensive  
10 developmental education reform.

11 In closing, CALAHE has  
12 consistently demonstrating -- demonstrated  
13 its commitment to the educational success of  
14 all students in Connecticut.

15 We want to reiterate our  
16 willingness to serve as a partner and work  
17 with our colleague, Dr. Nunez, and the Board  
18 of Regents as Connecticut continues to move  
19 forward to improve the lives of our students  
20 and their families. That is the position  
21 that CALAHE has taken relative to PA 12-40.

22 And, again, as an organization  
23 that serves our membership and constituency,  
24 they voiced their opinion, they made calls,  
25 and we had to respond accordingly. And I'll

1 entertain any questions.

2 THE CHAIRPERSON: Thank you.

3 So do we have any questions  
4 from the board?

5 Commissioner Gonzalez.

6 COMM. ANA GONZALEZ: Thank  
7 you all so very much for your information  
8 and -- and your feedback. I have several  
9 questions.

10 First of all, if -- the -- the  
11 different levels, we're looking at the  
12 different levels explained by Dr. Nunez.

13 Level 3, upon completing Level  
14 3, understandably, the -- the student cannot  
15 utilize that for college credit. But can the  
16 student, then, transfer either to a state  
17 college or continue their curriculum at the  
18 community college to attain their associates?

19 DR. NUNEZ: When you finish  
20 Level 3, you go -- you can go to Level 1 and  
21 skip 2 or you go to 2. You don't have to  
22 leave the college. It's a system that's --  
23 and that was part of the -- the design of the  
24 system that's completely articulated.

25 But within your question, you

1 make an interesting point. Because remember  
2 I said, that in Level 3, some of the  
3 workshops are three weeks. The colleges have  
4 to design courses that are short courses, so  
5 that if you finish your remediation right  
6 away in Level 3, you can go into a Level 2 or  
7 a Level 1 right away.

8 COMM. ANA GONZALEZ: The  
9 question comes from the following scenario.

10 I've talked to various veteran  
11 communities. And many veterans, young high  
12 school men, immediately after high school  
13 went into the military. They served and --  
14 and valiantly served their nation for  
15 six/eight years and now they want to take  
16 advantage of their GI bill or go into  
17 college.

18 Let's say that, once you go to  
19 Southern Connecticut State University,  
20 because they have a fabulous veterans  
21 program, but they don't meet the criteria  
22 because they are -- they need to take  
23 remedial courses --

24 DR. NUNEZ: Right.

25 COMM. ANA GONZALEZ: -- what

1 would be the scenario there? Is he supposed  
2 to go to a community college, or can they  
3 continue at Southern?

4 DR. NUNEZ: The four state  
5 colleges do not offer Level 1 and 2. We have  
6 admission standards for university. We're  
7 ranked -- Eastern is ranked in U.S. News and  
8 World Report in the top 25 public  
9 universities in the North, and that goes all  
10 the way down to Maryland and across to  
11 Pennsylvania.

12 Our admissions criteria for  
13 the four state colleges would never allow a  
14 vet who is at Level 3 to be admitted. They  
15 would have to go to a community college,  
16 finish the remediation at Level 3. And then,  
17 when they're in Level 2, they could be  
18 admitted, a few of them, but mostly they  
19 would have to wait until they're in Level 1  
20 to be admitted.

21 The remediation that the four  
22 state universities offers is only Level 1.  
23 It's the community colleges that offer 1, 2  
24 and 3.

25 COMM. ANA GONZALEZ: Will the

1 student be able to obtain college credits at  
2 the intensive level?

3 DR. NUNEZ: Those credits are  
4 what has always existed. Yes, financial aid  
5 will pay for the credits. Yes, you gain  
6 credits, but those credits do not count  
7 towards graduation. They count towards your  
8 financial aid. So you're getting credit, but  
9 it's not graduation credit.

10 The credit that counts is  
11 number one. Level 1 is college level, so all  
12 those credits will count towards graduation.

13 COMM. ANA GONZALEZ: Two more  
14 questions.

15 In the Level 3, I -- I --  
16 based on the -- the comments stated earlier,  
17 adult education will be contributing to  
18 providing support for these students. But  
19 many adult education programs are very low  
20 staffed, focused on GED, ESLs.

21 How -- how is this going to be  
22 helpful to the -- to the advancement of the  
23 students?

24 MR. HORAN: So this -- we have  
25 those same concerns. And this is a new area

1 for adult ed. And, in fact, before 2013,  
2 they couldn't even serve -- well, they  
3 generally were not supposed to serve students  
4 who already had a -- a -- any students who  
5 already had a high school degree. So this is  
6 a new area for them.

7 And we've been talking to the  
8 adult ed providers. They're very interested  
9 in working with this group, but this is going  
10 to be a new area for them. So there is money  
11 allocated just this past session. That money  
12 has not yet started to flow, but their intent  
13 is to serve those students now, generally,  
14 for the first time, for many of them.

15 So it's an untested area, but  
16 given that there's not -- or there may not be  
17 adequate resources for the community colleges  
18 to address those needs, it does make sense to  
19 involve adult ed. And that has been the case  
20 in many other states.

21 I don't know if anybody else  
22 wants to comment.

23 DR. NUNEZ: Yes. Of the -- of  
24 the \$10.8 million allocated, 2 million the  
25 Legislature set aside for adult ed. So that

1 \$2 million, they actually divided it among  
2 the 12 community colleges, depending on  
3 how -- your enrollment. The larger community  
4 colleges got more of the adult ed money and  
5 the smaller ones got less.

6 The theory behind this is that  
7 what adult ed has, that they're masters at,  
8 much better than colleges and universities,  
9 are the wraparound services: the social  
10 workers, the people that understand child  
11 care, the people that understand how to get  
12 you bus fare to get to school, because adult  
13 ed has operated in that -- in that world  
14 always.

15 So what the Legislature  
16 thought was that adult ed's participation  
17 will help community colleges because they  
18 have the wraparound services, not only the  
19 delivery of the services, which they can do  
20 with this money, but they also have the --  
21 the connections to those services. And  
22 that's the theory behind it.

23 I actually think it's going to  
24 be interesting to see whether it makes a  
25 difference in Level 3.

1                   COMM. ANA GONZALEZ:     And the  
2 final question.

3                   What is the possibility that  
4 many of the students that get placed on  
5 remedial courses have a learning disability?

6                   DR. NUNEZ:    High.   It's very  
7 high that they're dyslexic or -- many of  
8 our -- and I'm going to speak because of --  
9 of the -- the session about Latino students.  
10 Some of them have been diagnosed with  
11 learning disabilities and have never gotten  
12 proper services.   Others have never been  
13 diagnosed with learning disabilities, and so  
14 they don't -- they don't perform well in  
15 school.

16                   So it's very possible that you  
17 would be put in a Level 3 structure, course  
18 work -- not course work -- but workshop  
19 instruction -- thank you, Myrna --  
20 instruction and that they would diagnose you  
21 at that level as learning disabled.

22                   Now, the 12 community colleges  
23 have -- has extensive expertise with learning  
24 disabilities.   So if it shows up in Level 3  
25 or 2 or 1, but especially in Level 3, they

1 will get the appropriate support.

2           COMM. ANA GONZALEZ: Thank you  
3 very much. And thank you once again for your  
4 commitment to our Latino students.

5           THE CHAIRPERSON: Commissioner  
6 Leaf.

7           COMM. PALMARES-LEAF: I  
8 have -- I have a few questions. And it's up  
9 to whoever feels that they want to answer  
10 them.

11           I -- I -- I'm from Danbury.  
12 And in Danbury, we just recently welcomed,  
13 you know, Naugatuck Community College to our  
14 downtown. And it's been very good for our  
15 downtown. We're really happy to have them  
16 there. We're the home of Western Connecticut  
17 State University, you know, with Dr.  
18 Schmotter, who's a great friend. And we are  
19 extremely concerned about this bill.

20           And one of the reasons -- I'll  
21 give you a personal story. A member of my  
22 family went through -- he only ever passed,  
23 you know, technical college -- technical  
24 school, and decided to enroll at Naugatuck  
25 Community College. "A" student at Henry

1 Abbott Tech. Okay. Let's say a couple of B  
2 pluses on the way. Goes to try to enroll in  
3 Naugatuck Community College and gets placed  
4 in English 98. Okay?

5 So when I hear the talks about  
6 remedial classes, when I see in the community  
7 and have felt it in my family, the issues  
8 begin so much before college, right, because  
9 we really have to look at the (indiscernible)  
10 whole educational system.

11 And when you have someone that  
12 looks at the transcript, has been told for  
13 four years that you're a good student, and  
14 they don't even get placed in the community  
15 college level, you know, it really begs to  
16 ask the question of the point of having  
17 remedial classes. And understanding you have  
18 also the question of state educational  
19 institutions making up for the failed  
20 policies and programs of municipal education,  
21 right, which, for me, it's at the heart of  
22 this problem because it's a cancer.

23 The longer you wait to treat  
24 it, the more complicated it gets and the more  
25 systems it infects and destroys the

1 possibility of likelihood of life which, in  
2 this case, is a college higher education. So  
3 it's a -- it's a very important subject in  
4 our community, and we're very concerned about  
5 it.

6 My other concern comes from  
7 being myself, someone who came to this  
8 country not speaking a word of English and  
9 knowing that in a public school system,  
10 Danbury High School has 3,000 students. It's  
11 a very large high school, 47 languages  
12 spoken, 35 percent of the population in the  
13 greater Danbury area was born outside of the  
14 United States.

15 So (indiscernible) community  
16 like Danbury -- and I know we have high  
17 school students graduating from the ESL  
18 program, meaning, in four years, we were not  
19 able graduate from a regular level English  
20 class. Right? Where are they going to  
21 place? They're even further on the spectrum.  
22 They're behind a Level 3 because they're  
23 going to have deficiencies from English. And  
24 they -- but they may place very well in math.  
25 But they may place very, very, very bad in

1 English.

2           So my biggest concerns come  
3 from -- and each of you can address it from  
4 your perspective -- what happens to English  
5 language learners in this whole story? What  
6 happens to the responsibility of our high  
7 schools? We can't -- can we have a ConnCAP  
8 (indiscernible)? That would be a dream,  
9 right, if we could have a ConnCAP program in  
10 every Connecticut high school, but we don't  
11 have that possibility right now. We don't  
12 have that ability right now to make that, you  
13 know, with a magic wand, happen. Because I  
14 think that the issue of remedial classes  
15 really starts at the municipal level and the  
16 level of education we're giving to our  
17 children.

18           We can have high expectations.  
19 You know, when I -- when I hear about high  
20 expectations or the level -- or the -- Level  
21 1 of the embedded, it's really a question of  
22 almost the discussion we were having about EL  
23 education, immersion versus bilingual  
24 education.

25           You know, like -- because when

1 you do immersion, right, you're using the  
2 system of saying, no, you get put into an  
3 English classroom and you sit in the back.  
4 And that pressure pushes you to want to catch  
5 up and learn the language.

6           And maybe at Level 3 we're  
7 saying, you know, we're going to put you in a  
8 Level 3 because we know we believe in you,  
9 and that pressure is going to make you --  
10 make you catch up and make you reach higher  
11 for your English, you know, proficiency or  
12 your math skills.

13           So, I think, all these  
14 conversations are so interrelated right now.  
15 And it just saddens me to know that it seems  
16 like we are not being very holistic about  
17 this issue.

18           So if any of you could just  
19 give me some comments about the relation to  
20 English language learners, the impact it's  
21 going to have on those communities, and your  
22 take on the responsibility of the quality of  
23 the municipal education in this whole issue,  
24 I would really appreciate it.

25           MS. GARCIA-BOWEN: I can

1 only -- I can only comment from the CALAHE's  
2 perspective and in hearing what our  
3 constituency go through, because they are in  
4 the system. And one of the things that I do  
5 know that CALAHE has done is to be -- make  
6 the high schools and the middle schools more  
7 aware of how to prepare through the class  
8 conferences.

9           Because remember I -- I have  
10 other comments that I -- I'm going to reserve  
11 them only because I'm here representing  
12 CALAHE. And I can only tell you what -- from  
13 CALAHE's perspective what we have done to try  
14 to provide the support for the high schools  
15 and middle schools and bringing it to the  
16 family through the class conferences.

17           But it is a problem, and I  
18 agree with you in that it's systemic. I  
19 think Awilda alluded to trying to have those  
20 contact type programs K through 12, instead  
21 of just in the middle school.

22           I think, as legislators, I  
23 would ask you to support funding for those  
24 programs. We -- and I'm going to use another  
25 hat -- we did at the four-year institutions

1 have -- put the Board of Education supported,  
2 like the (indiscernible), different than the  
3 ConnCAP. We had ConnCAP programs for  
4 students who were -- showed promise. And we  
5 had both Latino (indiscernible) programs on  
6 our particular campus and we had a program  
7 that serviced African-American students. And  
8 these programs were (indiscernible) but the  
9 successes that we experienced as a result of  
10 that were tremendous, very much similar to  
11 the numbers that Awilda was mentioning in  
12 terms of (indiscernible). But those are the  
13 programs that are cut.

14 And so with that, I agree with  
15 you. And Dr. Nunez had indicated she didn't  
16 want to point fingers. But, basically, I  
17 think you were saying that we really have to  
18 start at the -- that level.

19 I don't believe -- and I don't  
20 know if anyone has a comment -- but I don't  
21 believe that the PA 12-40 addresses the ESL  
22 at all. I think that is not a population --  
23 okay -- good.

24 MS. REASCO: What I wanted to  
25 add is also that -- that we have -- Jim

1 mentioned Bridges' programs, like educational  
2 opportunity programs that, you know, our --  
3 our admissions goes out and talks about  
4 Bridges, talks about the EOP, the Education  
5 Opportunity Programs, that we've had at  
6 Central for now 47 years. It's another  
7 program that will, you know -- that we're  
8 trying to also support. I'm seeing a lot  
9 more students.

10 I -- I just want to bring it  
11 back to -- for the past five years, I have  
12 been seeing more students that come from  
13 South and Central America. Okay, they come  
14 in. Been here in the country for five years,  
15 okay. They come in through our EOP program.  
16 They're our shining stars. I'm telling you  
17 they are. Okay. They were born in Puerto  
18 Rico. They come here five years. They're  
19 our shining stars. I want to say that.

20 And I -- and I -- because --  
21 because, Jim, you mentioned Bridges'  
22 programs, I really think these programs are  
23 so important and that we have to enhance the  
24 funding, support them. Because in these  
25 Bridges' programs, even though they're coming

1 in pre-college, there is still parental  
2 involvement, okay.

3 And I think -- I -- I think  
4 people have to be informed. People -- you  
5 know, la familia. We've got to go back to  
6 our -- our (indiscernible) and inform them as  
7 to -- you know, years ago, remember we used  
8 to protest, protest, protest about, you know,  
9 we want this.

10 I -- I remember my mother  
11 protesting about ESL, English as a second  
12 language when we came from Puerto Rico.  
13 Okay, we're going to speak English in school,  
14 but you're going to speak Spanish at home.  
15 That's what mommy told us. Okay.

16 So I think there -- there has  
17 to be -- there has to be more of a movement  
18 where, you know, we have to continue to drown  
19 our -- our Latinos with (indiscernible).  
20 Okay. And I know New Britain has been doing  
21 that with numerous superintendents that we've  
22 had.

23 You know, everybody goes to  
24 college. Everybody goes to college. But  
25 sometimes I think that not everybody

1 should -- is for college. You know,  
2 there's -- I -- I don't want to offend -- you  
3 know -- I mean, I know we tell our Latinos to  
4 (indiscernible) diploma and they become the  
5 best workers. And some of them have better  
6 jobs than some of those students that have  
7 bachelor's degrees, the ones that I've  
8 encountered. Okay.

9 So therefore, what -- what  
10 I'm -- what I'm trying to say is that we need  
11 to advocate more. And we have to -- you  
12 know, we have to -- our communities, and it  
13 starts in the schools (indiscernible) and in  
14 the homes. We've got to really start in the  
15 home. And I'm sure you know this. Okay.

16 MR. HORAN: So just one or two  
17 comments. One, part of the motivation for PA  
18 12-40 was about students who are placed in  
19 remedial education and shouldn't be at all,  
20 and hence the need for placement reform  
21 and -- and looking at multiple measures, as  
22 Dr. Nunez described. So that's one way to  
23 help prevent students who may be -- are  
24 actually good performers but don't do well on  
25 ACCUPLACER, to get them out of remedial

1 education or to put them in the embedded  
2 classes instead of intensive.

3           Second, in terms of the -- the  
4 poor performance that many students have, Dr.  
5 Nunez described that an A in one high school  
6 is not the same as an A in another, and  
7 statistics in one school is not the same as  
8 statistics in another. And that's a real  
9 problem.

10           I don't know if Common Core  
11 standards will -- are the answer to that  
12 problem, but again, there's a problem, and  
13 something needs to be done. And we'll see  
14 whether Common Core helps to create  
15 uniformity across schools so that there would  
16 be a reduced need over time. But that's not  
17 going to happen overnight. That's not going  
18 to work for the adults that are already out  
19 there in the workforce who are many of the  
20 students that come back to community  
21 colleges.

22           So that's just, you know, a  
23 couple of considerations that -- that we look  
24 at.

25           DR. NUNEZ: Some of you are

1 lawyers, and I wish that people could sue the  
2 high school that they went to for not having  
3 given the education that they said that they  
4 got. But part of me is -- I'm being  
5 flippant, in a way, but the truth of the  
6 matter is that, at Eastern, I can tell you,  
7 with predicted analytics, what high school  
8 you come from how you're going to do at  
9 Eastern.

10           And there are high schools we  
11 take students from, and we know we have to  
12 put a machine behind you to get you through,  
13 even though you were admitted based on your  
14 -- your grades and scores because the math  
15 that you got was not -- is not going to  
16 get -- allow you to pass the courses --  
17 college level math courses and the English  
18 too.

19           So I think you're bringing up  
20 an excellent point. And -- and the more the  
21 commission can focus on K through 12,  
22 especially the funding formula. As you know,  
23 the funding formula in Connecticut is --  
24 that's what it's about. It's about -- the  
25 funding is based on real estate taxes and not

1 on, you know -- it's not even across the  
2 board. And schools don't have the money.

3 The final point I would make,  
4 that ESL was not in the bill. And ESL is  
5 completely whole in the state system --  
6 public -- higher education system, which  
7 means that the ESL courses that are offered  
8 are parallel to remediation. They're not  
9 under remediation. They're parallel.

10 So if you take a reading  
11 course that's ESL-based or a writing course,  
12 that can get you to Level 1, you don't have  
13 to go through Level 3 to do that, so ESL is  
14 whole.

15 But I will tell you this, that  
16 so many students come, and what they want is  
17 to be fast-tracked. They don't want to go  
18 through ESL 1, ESL 2, Remediation 1,  
19 Remediation -- you know, it's just too -- too  
20 many semesters. So this idea of allowing  
21 them to finish their ESL courses and then  
22 going right into college level courses is  
23 sustained.

24 THE CHAIRPERSON: We have two  
25 more questions.

1 Commissioner Soto.

2 COMM. SOTO: Okay. Thank the  
3 panel -- I thank the panel for being here. I  
4 have a -- a few questions. I'll try to keep  
5 it brief, but I also have a comment.

6 My first question is to Ms.  
7 Garcia. Is -- is it my understanding, for  
8 clarification, that CALAHE is against this  
9 bill?

10 MS. GARCIA-BOWEN: We had  
11 concerns that were brought to us from our  
12 membership, and we felt it important for us  
13 to state what those concerns are through the  
14 three venues that I indicated, through the  
15 conference, through the -- and -- and to vet  
16 out what are these concerns and whether or  
17 not we -- we didn't take a position. We just  
18 took the position of making those that had  
19 to -- are implementing the program, we want  
20 to make them aware do not forget that these  
21 are the concerns of the very people who work  
22 with our -- our students.

23 COMM. SOTO: Okay. Thank you.  
24 That's what -- I needed clarification on  
25 that.

1                   My -- I -- I do want to go  
2 ahead and comment on the Conn -- ConnCAP. I  
3 think that's a -- I've never heard of it,  
4 actually, so that's a -- I think that's a  
5 great program and -- based on what you told  
6 us. And I think that probably would work all  
7 across the state, help the students at  
8 that -- those levels, middle school and high  
9 school, so that they can start preparing  
10 themselves for those.

11                   And one of the comments you  
12 made was not every child or every student  
13 should be in college or it's -- it's -- for  
14 college. And I agree wholeheartedly about  
15 that. But at least for those that -- that  
16 want to go to college, that will be a great  
17 start for them to start getting used to it.

18                   My next question is for Mr. --  
19 I -- I'm -- Horan. Thank you very much.

20                   Dr. Nunez mentioned that there  
21 was multiple measures. You, in your  
22 PowerPoint slide, only indicated two. Why  
23 two, and what are those two? I don't think  
24 you mentioned it. If you did, I missed it.

25                   MR. HORAN: Yeah, no problem.

1 There have -- there have to be multiple  
2 measures. You can't only use one. So it  
3 said -- I think the slide says two or more,  
4 there have to be two or more measures used.

5 So in addition to the  
6 ACCUPLACER, it can be your high school  
7 grades. If you took the SAT or ACT, it can  
8 be your high school grades in a particular  
9 subject like math only or English only. I  
10 don't know if there are others.

11 A VOICE: (Indiscernible.)

12 MR. HORAN: Teacher  
13 recommendations. So -- so there are multiple  
14 measures that are used, and it's not just the  
15 ACCUPLACER to determine whether you get  
16 placed at remedial (indiscernible).

17 COMM. SOTO: Okay. Thank you.

18 And my other question is for  
19 Dr. Nunez. In the -- the levels that you  
20 mention, embedded in terms of transitional,  
21 you indicated, I think, by our Commissioner  
22 Leaf here, who asked the same question I had,  
23 you said that once they're done with the  
24 transitional, they have the opportunity to go  
25 into the embedded or intensive. Is that a

1 choice or that's -- is it directed?

2 DR. NUNEZ: It's -- it's based  
3 on the multiple measures. So when you finish  
4 three, somebody will assess you on the -- the  
5 ACCUPLACER or some placement tests, how you  
6 did in the course -- in the instruction  
7 itself because they will be giving you tests,  
8 the recommendation of the teacher, and then  
9 you'll either go to Level 2 or 1.

10 COMM. SOTO: Okay.

11 And if -- if, in Level 2 or 1,  
12 if they are stuck at those levels, what  
13 happens?

14 DR. NUNEZ: Well, before, if  
15 you were in Level 3, you ate up all your  
16 financial aid, and you never graduated from  
17 college. Now, you -- the repeat policies of  
18 the college are still in play, which means  
19 that if at Central or if at Western you take  
20 physics and you fail it once, they allow you  
21 take it a second time.

22 The policy for physics will be  
23 the policy for remediation. They're not  
24 going to have, like, another policy, you  
25 know, that that's going to be conflicting.

1 So, if a student fails intensive or fails  
2 embedded, they would get a second chance at  
3 the course.

4 In the third level, the bottom  
5 level, there are no -- there's no courses, so  
6 there's nothing to fail, and it's all free.  
7 So they're not -- you're not using up your  
8 financial aid.

9 COMM. SOTO: And everybody  
10 passes the -- the bottom level because --

11 DR. NUNEZ: Not -- not  
12 necessarily.

13 COMM. SOTO: No. Okay.

14 DR. NUNEZ: Not necessarily.

15 COMM. SOTO: Can you clarify  
16 that please?

17 DR. NUNEZ: Yes. If I'm lazy  
18 and I'm not doing the work that the --  
19 that -- the professor knows because we have,  
20 you know -- you know, how the world is.  
21 People come in, and they say I'm going to do  
22 this, I'm going to do that.

23 COMM. SOTO: Right.

24 DR. NUNEZ: They never do  
25 their homework. They don't pass the quizzes.

1 They don't pass the tests. You will -- you  
2 will not go to the next level. You can't.  
3 Because, ultimately, the accountability is  
4 with the professor who's teaching philosophy  
5 and political science.

6           When you're in that class,  
7 you've got to be able to do that work. So  
8 there's no point passing you through if  
9 you're not showing signs that you're  
10 progressing in the -- in the acquisition of  
11 those skills.

12           COMM. SOTO: Okay. Thank you  
13 very much.

14           Finally, I'll say this. I --  
15 as a -- as a current student of a community  
16 college in my area, I've been through that.  
17 I've took the ACCUPLACER test, and I scored  
18 very well in the reading and writing but not  
19 very well in the math. I was out of school  
20 for quite a while and so coming back was  
21 impacting.

22           Having said that, I went  
23 through -- through the classes. I was placed  
24 in the -- the initial algebra.

25           A VOICE: (Indiscernible).

1                   COMM. SOTO: Right. And --  
2 and I was foolish to take on too many  
3 classes, and so I failed that as well.

4                   Nevertheless, I'm -- I'm now  
5 taking the intensive to be placed at 137 --  
6 Math 137. So, you know, it's also a part of  
7 the student to -- to be able to seek that  
8 assistance and try to advance further without  
9 a lot of instruction going on.

10                   Thank you. Thank you very  
11 much for your -- you being here and  
12 presenting your -- your arguments. Thank  
13 you.

14                   DR. NUNEZ: I -- I think you  
15 made such a good point. The bottom line is  
16 we should not be teaching this in college.  
17 This should have all been done in high  
18 school, unless you're an adult who never went  
19 to high school, where you have a GED and  
20 there -- that should be a small population,  
21 not this big huge population.

22                   THE CHAIRPERSON: Two more.  
23 We have Commissioner Castillo -- Werner,  
24 Commissioner Hernandez.

25                   Commissioner Castillo.

1                   COMM. CASTILLO: Thank you,  
2 through the Chair.

3                   Thank you for our panel today.  
4 It's interesting this law has already passed.  
5 So it isn't much that we can do but to see  
6 the results at the end of, what do you say,  
7 five years from now, that they're going to  
8 look at this, which I think is very  
9 interesting because if you know -- and I  
10 think that we should be talking -- everybody  
11 doesn't want to say about the schools, but  
12 the schools have a -- a whole lot to do with  
13 how our kids determine if they're going to  
14 college or not.

15                   And I worked at New Britain  
16 High School and I saw a lot of our kids,  
17 Latino kids, in special ed, who would say I'm  
18 going to college. And it wasn't because --  
19 some of them wanted to go, but the school was  
20 pushing college, college, college.

21                   And you're right, Awilda, not  
22 everybody is for -- for college.

23                   But they went, and some of the  
24 kids would come back crying to me because  
25 they couldn't make it. They just didn't

1 understand. How -- how can they say I can go  
2 to college and I -- and I failed?

3 Our kids, our Latino kids, 75  
4 percent of those kids are in special ed or in  
5 English language classes. You know, we're  
6 not looking at that carefully. So, yes, some  
7 of our kids can go to college, but others  
8 can't. And there should be other places  
9 where these kids can go and become productive  
10 and do just as well.

11 But I think there has to be a  
12 correlation with the colleges and the high  
13 schools so that we don't get those kids that  
14 go and don't -- and are not successful.  
15 There has to be some kind of correlation or  
16 communication. And I say -- I mean I'm not  
17 saying you don't have them, but -- and --  
18 and -- I think it's a job of all of us.

19 None of us are legislators  
20 here. We're all volunteers and are  
21 interested in the Latino community and making  
22 sure that our kids move forward. Not  
23 everybody has to go to college.

24 But it will be interesting to  
25 see the results of this five-year law. And

1 if it doesn't work or the results of this  
2 law -- because I think it's going to show us  
3 what kind of work needs to be done, and it  
4 has to go back to the education system. But  
5 we all have to take a part in that.

6 MR. HORAN: Yeah, if I could  
7 just comment with regard to the -- the  
8 five-year. I -- I think what we were saying  
9 is that you have to look over time, like a  
10 five-year period, to see what the impact is.  
11 But we actually need to look year by year  
12 with what's being done, not just wait for  
13 five years.

14 So, for example, I -- I think  
15 we will be able to tell what kind of  
16 placement tests are more accurate. We can  
17 tell what types of transitional programs, the  
18 very -- mixed -- mixed terms -- but intensive  
19 classes, like those four-week classes that  
20 Dr. Nunez described, what's working and  
21 what's not. So those things can be done on a  
22 year-by-year basis. But it will take a  
23 period of, like, five years to really see  
24 what's working.

25 The legislation -- you know,

1 the law is passed, as you said. It's there.  
2 So it's up to all of us to -- to exercise our  
3 influence. And I think it is important that  
4 the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs  
5 Commission is looking at this because I think  
6 you can have a big impact on how this is  
7 implemented, and that's really critical.

8                   It's not just, well, now we  
9 have wait and see, no. Get involved.  
10 Comment. If there are things that you don't  
11 like about how it's -- it's being  
12 implemented, each year there have been tweaks  
13 to the legislation, and that can continue to  
14 happen if that's what's -- what's necessary.

15                   COMM. CASTILLO: All right. I  
16 see. I -- I thought that you had said five  
17 years. And you're right. We shouldn't wait  
18 five years because in five years all kinds of  
19 stuff could happen. So we should evaluate on  
20 a yearly basis.

21                   And you're correct also. As a  
22 Commission, we haven't made a decision yet  
23 where we want to be. And our job is to  
24 make -- help the Legislators make a  
25 difference.

1 MR. HORAN: Right.

2 COMM. CASTILLO: And if that  
3 law has to be amended, or something else that  
4 needs to take place, yes, our advice, but all  
5 of you guys too, because I think that is what  
6 we -- why you've come here.

7 So, to me, it is important  
8 that you evaluate it on a yearly basis. But  
9 I again -- I think it needs to go back to the  
10 education system because there is where our  
11 kids are being pushed to say go to college,  
12 and a lot of them are not there yet because  
13 they're not giving the accurate -- or coming  
14 out with the results that they can survive.  
15 And, again, not everybody is college product.

16 I went through the summer  
17 program at Southern Connecticut, and I  
18 graduated. I got my master's degree. It was  
19 excellent for me. But I had that  
20 opportunity, others didn't.

21 And I think that we just got a  
22 lot of work to do. Still our kids, Latino  
23 kids, are still not completing high school,  
24 and those that go to college aren't  
25 completing either. So there's something

1 going on.

2 MR. HORAN: Yep.

3 COMM. CASTILLO: And I think  
4 if we all can work together, I think that it  
5 will be successful. Thank you.

6 A VOICE: I wanted to make a  
7 comment with regard to what you just said in  
8 terms of the colleges and universities  
9 working with the high schools and middle  
10 school.

11 I believe, if I'm not  
12 mistaken -- and, Dr. Nunez, you can correct  
13 me if I'm wrong -- but the institutions are  
14 looking for the community colleges to work  
15 with their local -- like adopt a school. And  
16 I think you have a program, right, that's --  
17 that's a -- a new -- a development, I think,  
18 in this whole -- you know, it's basically  
19 from my lens, I'm seeing it as a trial and  
20 error.

21 We're going to try certain  
22 things. We're going to look at the best  
23 practices, see what works, what doesn't work.  
24 But one of the comments I wanted to -- to  
25 make here and leave you with is when the

1 Legislators start talking about this PA 12-40  
2 and the programs that are out there  
3 supporting the funding -- because you cannot  
4 have these programs without support and  
5 funding -- so that's one of the areas that I  
6 think we wanted to lobby is to provide more  
7 funding so that we can come up with programs  
8 and -- and try best practices to see what the  
9 outcomes are. And I -- I think we need to do  
10 that with our Legislators.

11 THE CHAIRPERSON: Thank you.  
12 Commissioner Hernandez. I'm  
13 sorry.

14 (Indiscernible).

15 COMM. HERNANDEZ: Short of  
16 stating the obvious, I think this is -- this  
17 is (indiscernible) problems that we are  
18 looking across the board from K to -- through  
19 12. We're just speaking that this PA 12-40  
20 is barely skimming the surface of the  
21 iceberg.

22 I mean, it's -- it's  
23 monumental what we are all looking at. All  
24 of us, relatively speaking, are either a  
25 result of or have been impacted by or have

1 been frustrated or are frustrated with all  
2 those realities and other things that we see,  
3 the budget priorities upside down, the lack  
4 of funding, the -- the, unfortunately, the  
5 fragmented educational system that we have.

6 I think it's -- what is it,  
7 189 towns in Connecticut? I want to say 169  
8 towns in Connecticut, and so God knows how  
9 many board of educations we have. If they  
10 don't talk to each other, there is no  
11 coordination. And -- and I think  
12 Commissioner Leaf made a great point about  
13 the challenge, I think, that we, as a  
14 Commission, begin to see that -- what  
15 everyone else is seeing, there's no  
16 coordination here, very, very, very poor.

17 And so here we throw PA 12-40  
18 at it -- the Legislature throws 12-40 at it,  
19 because there's a big, you know, systemic --  
20 systemic problem. And we are now putting  
21 pressure on the -- on the higher education  
22 system to respond or to be responsible for  
23 what was a failure at the K through 12  
24 levels.

25 So lacking that cohesive,

1 holistic approach, we are, again, setting  
2 ourselves all up for frustration, the  
3 fragmentation all over again, the lack of  
4 funding. And so this is something that we,  
5 as a Commission, I think we need to be very,  
6 very much on top of. And as we spoke just a  
7 minute ago, not wait for five years, not wait  
8 for this thing to continue to go on, but  
9 however we can, all, we have the same  
10 interest at heart. We see some cohesiveness,  
11 some collaboration and coordination of  
12 efforts and the -- the necessary funding.

13           Without funding, we can  
14 whistle until -- you know whistle Dixie until  
15 whatever, and we're not going to accomplish  
16 much. So I would -- I thank the panel for  
17 bringing to our attention the nuances, the  
18 intricacies, the frustration that you, as  
19 educators, have. And I think we, as  
20 representatives of the community, kind of  
21 echo and live the same reality and  
22 frustration.

23           So I think that somewhere  
24 along the line, we need to be much more  
25 proactive when it comes to the formula for

1 funding our educational system. And for one,  
2 speaking to a regional concept, you know,  
3 where you have, you know, county days or  
4 regional days approaches to education at the  
5 pre-K -- rather, the pre-K through 12, so  
6 that you have things that are, you know,  
7 really working. I hope -- and we look  
8 forward to the best practices, you know,  
9 observations as we go forward.

10 My question is directed to  
11 Awilda specifically. We've seen the  
12 successes. And so -- and -- and in the midst  
13 of all this challenging data and information  
14 that the panel is here and we all see and  
15 live on a day-to-day basis, you bring a  
16 light, a little bit of a silver lining in the  
17 clouds. And I'm an eternal optimist so I  
18 latch on to that silver light, you know, or  
19 silver lining.

20 Can you tell us where are  
21 there other programs like the ConnCAP?

22 MS. REASCO: Well, there --  
23 there were Upward Bound programs. They were  
24 TRiO programs -- (indiscernible) programs  
25 from TRiO to -- right from the 1960s.

1           Back in the eighties, when I  
2 started, when the -- when the proposal was  
3 put in -- into my hands, we had 11 -- 11  
4 ConnCAP programs. We're down to four.

5           COMM. HERNANDEZ:     Where are  
6 those four?

7           MS. REASCO:     Yes, good  
8 question.

9           A VOICE:     (Indiscernible.)

10          MS. REASCO:     Yes.

11          COMM. HERNANDEZ:   Yeah.

12          MS. REASCO:     Okay. So you're  
13 going to find UConn, Western, Naugatuck  
14 Valley, and New Britain.

15          A VOICE:     (Indiscernible.)

16          MS. REASCO:     Okay.

17          A VOICE:     (Indiscernible.)

18          MS. REASCO:     And -- and,  
19 again, Myrna, I think we all raise funding  
20 and resources. And just keep in mind, one  
21 size doesn't fit all when we talk about  
22 remediation or development. One size doesn't  
23 fit all. Okay?

24                 You can't put all Latinos into  
25 one because, I mean, they all have different

1 capabilities. Right?

2 COMM. HERNANDEZ: Uh-huh.

3 MS. REASCO: Remember that.

4 When we were growing up --

5 COMM. HERNANDEZ: Yes.

6 MS. REASCO: -- we all have  
7 different talents. I remember my grandma  
8 telling me that. The same thing with kids.

9 COMM. HERNANDEZ: So we have  
10 four --

11 MS. REASCO: So we have four  
12 concepts.

13 COMM. HERNANDEZ: -- similar  
14 type programs at UConn, at Western --

15 MS. REASCO: Yes.

16 COMM. HERNANDEZ: -- at  
17 Naugatuck and --

18 MS. REASCO: And New Britain.

19 COMM. HERNANDEZ: -- and New  
20 Britain.

21 MS. REASCO: Yes. And we have  
22 a good website. If you want to go to CCSU's  
23 ConnCAP Program, you can search --

24 COMM. HERNANDEZ: That was my  
25 next question.

1 MS. REASCO: Yes.

2 COMM. HERNANDEZ: From the  
3 best practices approach --

4 MS. REASCO: Yes.

5 COMM. HERNANDEZ: -- has that  
6 best practices been synthesized somewhere so  
7 that, let's say that if the Willimantic  
8 community wanted to have something like --

9 MS. REASCO: Uh-huh. Uh-huh.  
10 Well, we do submit --

11 COMM. HERNANDEZ: -- ConnCAP.

12 MS. REASCO: -- well, the  
13 success of the program is based on graduation  
14 and retention like anything else. Right? So  
15 we do --

16 COMM. HERNANDEZ:

17 (Indiscernible.)

18 MS. REASCO: -- we do submit  
19 to Department of Higher Education our --  
20 every three months a report, our data, our  
21 student data --

22 COMM. HERNANDEZ: Uh-huh.

23 MS. REASCO: -- because we  
24 have to keep our student -- and because we  
25 have to keep our students -- we -- we can't

1 accept students after the tenth grade.  
2 They're with us. They're stuck with us for  
3 five years.

4 So when we tell the parents  
5 this is a contract, this is an agreement,  
6 you're with us for five years. So,  
7 therefore, just Google us. We have a website  
8 at CCSU ConnCAP Program.

9 COMM. HERNANDEZ: So if we can  
10 speak to the practical issues that our  
11 community face --

12 MS. REASCO: Uh-huh.

13 COMM. HERNANDEZ: -- if we had  
14 a community, since we represent many sectors  
15 of the community --

16 MS. REASCO: Sure.

17 COMM. HERNANDEZ: -- that  
18 wanted to enact or --

19 MS. REASCO: Uh-huh.

20 COMM. HERNANDEZ: -- initiate  
21 or duplicate or replicate a program --

22 MS. REASCO: Okay. Uh-huh.  
23 Sure.

24 COMM. HERNANDEZ: -- like  
25 yours, what are some of the, like -- one --

1 just give me one, two, three.

2 MS. REASCO: What was the  
3 question again? I'm sorry.

4 COMM. HERNANDEZ: To replicate  
5 your program --

6 MS. REASCO: Oh, you -- you --  
7 if I -- my -- my advice to you is call the  
8 Department of Higher Education. And, you  
9 know, and my staff, Latinas, they -- one is  
10 from Waterbury. If you need somebody from  
11 Waterbury to come in and talk to you,  
12 Milagros Velez can do that.

13 And also, we have professors  
14 at the university -- I mean, if you ever want  
15 to -- we can -- I will be available to help  
16 you as much as I can, put it that way. But  
17 start off with the Department of Higher  
18 Education who -- who used to fund 11 ConnCAP  
19 programs. Now, we're down to four.

20 COMM. HERNANDEZ: Fine. Thank  
21 you.

22 MS. REASCO: Okay. And -- and  
23 programs that have proven retention and  
24 graduation. Okay.

25 COMM. HERNANDEZ: What a

1 concept. The things that work, we don't  
2 fund.

3 THE CHAIRPERSON: Commissioner  
4 Salorio.

5 COMM. SALORIO: Thank you  
6 again very much for coming.

7 I really just have one brief  
8 question. And this seems to me the three --  
9 the three levels may -- seem to make a great  
10 deal of sense. Do you have the people to  
11 teach them? Where are they going to come  
12 from?

13 DR. NUNEZ: Yes. We have a  
14 fabulous faculty at the community colleges  
15 and at the state colleges. So there are  
16 full-time people who actually have deep, deep  
17 philosophical commitments to this population.

18 So they, for Level 1 and Level  
19 2, teach mathematics and English. For Level  
20 3, not every college has full-time people  
21 teaching it, but the full-time people  
22 supervise the adjuncts that are teaching it.

23 And so I think that there is,  
24 you know, there is a cadre of dedicated  
25 people who will work with this population,

1 but it's not everybody can teach it. They're  
2 selected people. You have to want to work  
3 with this population to do it well.

4 THE CHAIRPERSON: Commissioner  
5 Fernandez.

6 COMM. FERNANDEZ: All right,  
7 community colleges. So thank you very much  
8 for your testimony today.

9 Willimantic does have a  
10 ConnCAP program because it's out of  
11 Quinebaug. So -- so we -- we've done that.  
12 And there's a lot of initiatives that both  
13 the community colleges -- I think I'm the  
14 only community college person here tonight.  
15 Right?

16 So there are a lot of programs  
17 that the community colleges work with  
18 Eastern, I mean, Dr. Nunez and I, the DEI  
19 program, the Hartford program, and so forth  
20 and so on.

21 So I think that we -- and --  
22 and looking at it holistically -- and we're  
23 one system of all 12 community colleges, four  
24 universities including the online university,  
25 the flagship UConn and everybody else gets

1 together, right, we should all -- we should  
2 all solve the problem.

3 But the problem is is that we  
4 have the largest minority achievement gap in  
5 the country. We can have ConnCAP, ConnCAB,  
6 Conn whatever, but we still, for the last  
7 five to six to seven years, have the largest  
8 achievement gap of any state.

9 That means a kid, a brown kid,  
10 in Alabama and Mississippi gets a better  
11 education than they do in Hartford,  
12 Connecticut. So -- so this thing makes my  
13 head spin around.

14 And for full disclosure, as I  
15 was intimately involved in the passage of PA  
16 12-40, I was a financial aid director before  
17 I was the director the Willimantic Center.  
18 This has implications on student debt, on the  
19 student debt load, that the students graduate  
20 with -- on average, right now, all students  
21 graduate with about 24 to \$28,000 in debt  
22 before they even have a job. And that's if  
23 they go to a state school.

24 So the issue is that financial  
25 aid regulations changed, roughly about three

1 years ago, where the Pell eligibility and the  
2 lifetime maximum went to six years. So that  
3 means you have six years for the poorest of  
4 the students, who are the lowest performing  
5 of the students, to complete a college  
6 education in that six-year period of time.  
7 After that, no more financial aid from the  
8 federal government.

9 Then there were changes to the  
10 caps granting of which was now called the  
11 Governor's Scholarship, the penalization of  
12 part-time students, the penalization of -- of  
13 students that were working adults, working  
14 mothers, and so forth and so on, who used to  
15 have full aid, right, are now limited again.

16 Meanwhile, in Willimantic, for  
17 example, only 2 percent of any kid that even  
18 had ELL anytime between kindergarten and 12th  
19 grade, 2 percent, right, even are at grade.

20 So anybody who tells you that  
21 somebody can do miracles for a 12-year  
22 deficiency in 15 weeks, they're completely  
23 lying to you. And a lot of people try to  
24 make it an access issue. It isn't about  
25 access, because the aspect of access is that

1 you're prepared to learn. That's the -- the  
2 aspect of the academy, that every kid, you  
3 know, can come in, in -- in that aspect of  
4 that.

5                   But the reality of the  
6 situation -- and I think that we're  
7 frustrated. I'm horrendously frustrated.  
8 And I'm frustrated with the sense that we  
9 don't deal with the problem which is, right,  
10 we have the largest minority achievement gap  
11 in the nation. And nobody is unifying higher  
12 education, the state universities, the  
13 community colleges, the Association for Human  
14 Services, you know, the Boy Scouts of  
15 America, right, to come here and address the  
16 fundamental issue that 2 percent of the kids  
17 who start ELL in Willimantic will never pass  
18 the college math course, 2 percent.

19                   So we continue to have  
20 fundamental discussions about a problem that  
21 nobody deals with. And we spend billions.  
22 How much did the Learning Corridor cost, just  
23 the Learning Corridor?

24                   When I was at Capital  
25 Community College, they were talking with

1 Trinity about the Learning Corridor. And the  
2 funding of adult basic education programs  
3 that used to be under JTPA, Joint Training  
4 Partnership Act, under pieces that were tied  
5 to specific pieces of welfare legislation,  
6 right, were all taken away.

7           So we have students that it  
8 doesn't matter. Right? It doesn't matter  
9 because we -- we, for the last four years,  
10 have been working on the same exact thing.  
11 It could be a Hispanic kid. It could be a  
12 Polish kid in New Britain. It could be a  
13 Haitian Creole kid in Norwich and in -- and  
14 in New London. Right. They all are in the  
15 same boat.

16           We attempted this year, just  
17 ten-month addition -- ten-month addition to  
18 the ELL, 30 months. Thirty months is not  
19 enough for these kids to be taught English at  
20 an elementary level school, period.

21           A VOICE: Uh-huh.

22           COMM. FERNANDEZ: So there's  
23 already a certain percentage of the  
24 population in all schools in Connecticut.  
25 This is the first time in the census, in

1 2010, that there is a Hispanic living in  
2 every town in Connecticut.

3 I travel to Brooklyn to do  
4 PIPs for the six families that live in  
5 Brooklyn, Connecticut. Okay?

6 A VOICE: (Indiscernible).

7 A VOICE: So don't count me.

8 COMM. FERNANDEZ: I'm counting  
9 you. So the issue is, is that we have to  
10 fundamentally, as a community and as people,  
11 for the love of God, we are just burning  
12 generation upon generation of kids, that  
13 every single person in this room had somebody  
14 that looked out for them and nobody's talking  
15 to them.

16 A VOICE: (Indiscernible.)

17 COMM. FERNANDEZ: Right?

18 And so it drives me, like --  
19 you know, I also know (indiscernible) a long  
20 time. We've known each other a long time,  
21 and I don't mince words. Right?

22 And so the point is that we  
23 should form and demand that this problem be  
24 addressed because it's frustrating for  
25 CALAHE, it's frustrating for the state

1 universities, it's frustrating for Central,  
2 it's frustrating for the center of -- I mean,  
3 for the Association of Human Services.

4 I can tell you that it drives  
5 me crazy. Right. And the community colleges  
6 are the entryway for higher education. The  
7 worst kept secret in Connecticut. We are the  
8 largest system of higher education in the  
9 state.

10 So we -- we've all got to work  
11 together on this. But the fundamental issue  
12 is that, until we deal with this achievement  
13 gap here, and -- and pretend it doesn't  
14 exist, right, we're not going to go anywhere.  
15 But I love you all, and I thank you for  
16 coming.

17 DR. NUNEZ: I -- I do think  
18 that -- that, Commissioner Fernandez, that  
19 that is the number one issue for you as a  
20 commission. I do believe that that is the  
21 issue. You should have somehow a shame list  
22 and publish it or something because it is the  
23 number one issue for the state.

24 THE CHAIRPERSON: Sure, Mr.  
25 Hernandez. We'll have to --

1           A VOICE: Just one -- very  
2 last brief observation to, I think, this  
3 climatic point. Thank you for the climax.  
4 We like -- we -- we need it.

5           And we all -- and at the end  
6 of the day we need a, you know, kick in the  
7 pants to really get real about the -- the  
8 real issues that our communities are living  
9 on a day-to-day basis because it is  
10 horrendous.

11           The failure rate of our high  
12 schools, the failure rate of our, you know,  
13 higher education is a sad state of affairs.  
14 The reality is that a lot of people don't  
15 make the connection or don't want to make the  
16 connection that if we have a failed  
17 educational system or a very -- or a  
18 significantly challenged educational system,  
19 then we would have a significantly challenged  
20 economic system.

21           So we scratch our heads at why  
22 America is dwindling and going down and down  
23 and down in terms of the economic prowess  
24 supposedly of America. It does not take  
25 rocket science to understand the correlation

1 between a failed educational system and a  
2 failed educational -- economic system.

3           So there will be no job  
4 creation until we have really true  
5 educational reform. We can talk about job  
6 creation until you're blue in the face and  
7 economic stimulus until you're blue in the  
8 face. If you don't get down to the core  
9 issues, as we all here are preaching to the  
10 choir, understand, we will not have true  
11 economic vibrancy or resiliency as -- as a  
12 country.

13           THE CHAIRPERSON: You're  
14 welcome.

15           A VOICE: (Indiscernible),  
16 Commissioner. If you're looking for the  
17 climax, the further these two gentlemen push  
18 their chairs back, that's when it's coming.  
19 This one is holding back big time tonight,  
20 but that's all right.

21           A VOICE: That's true.

22           A VOICE: You see this?

23           THE CHAIRPERSON: Well, I want  
24 to thank you guys for coming. It was very,  
25 very informative. There's just so many

1 levels, like -- like we all said, to this --  
2 to this issue and this problem. I want to  
3 commend your work in -- in New Britain, the  
4 work that you do.

5           You know, I look back at my  
6 own -- the largest city in -- in the state,  
7 Bridgeport, and the dysfunctionality between  
8 our Board of Education versus, you know,  
9 the -- the many factors that are in --  
10 entwined into this whole big problem. And  
11 the dysfunctionality is just -- it saddens  
12 me. And yet, I want to commend all you guys  
13 for all the work you do.

14           We, as a commission, will  
15 continue on looking at this each session as  
16 it comes through. And hopefully, we'll all  
17 get through this together. So thank you once  
18 again.

19           Thank you.

20           (End of compact disc sound  
21 recording excerpt.)

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## 1 CERTIFICATE

2 I hereby certify that the foregoing 108  
3 pages are a complete and accurate  
4 transcription from a compact disc sound  
5 recording of an excerpt of the LATINO AND  
6 PUERTO RICAN AFFAIRS COMMISSION MONTHLY  
7 MEETING, which was held before RICHARD A.  
8 CRUZ, Chairperson, at 18-20 Trinity Street,  
9 Hartford, Connecticut, on May 21, 2014.

10 I further certify that the sound  
11 recording was transcribed by employees of the  
12 word processing department of United  
13 Reporters, Inc., under my direction.

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