



LULAC

LEAGUE OF LATIN AMERICAN CITIZENS *of* QUEENS

TESTIMONY
to the
NEW YORK STATE SENATE FINANCE & ASSEMBLY WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEES
JOINT HEARING ON THE EXECUTIVE BUDGET 2015-16
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2015

Supporting Governor Cuomo's Proposed Education Tax Credit

My name is Jason Pagan. I serve as the Director of Legislative Affairs for the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) Council 23047 of Queens, New York.

The mission of LULAC is to advance the economic condition, educational attainment, political influence, housing, health and civil rights of the Hispanic population of the United States. Founded in 1929, LULAC is the oldest, most widely respected Hispanic civil rights organization in America. Today with over 900 councils nationwide, our purpose is to continue the advancement of Latin American citizens everywhere.

On behalf of LULAC Council 23047, we support the inclusion of the Governor's proposal for an Education Tax Credit in any final budget adopted for state fiscal year of 2015-16 (**Part E of Article VII bill S.2006/A.3006**). We hold this position because we believe it is another of many policy prescriptions that can improve the lives of the children and communities we serve.

With children's education in particular, we must be willing to think outside the box, encourage innovation and use all available means to reach, serve, house and educate them. The Education Tax Credit is our answer to provide access to scholarship opportunities for more children and to expand programming needs in our public schools as well as through our community-based organizations that excel in complementing additional services.

Most importantly, the Education Tax Credit (through the focus of Pre-K - Grade 12 education) is an additional tool for us to meet the ever-increasing challenges of helping students to become better prepared for college.

By enacting this Education Tax Credit, potentially hundreds of community organizations and non-profits throughout New York will be able to tap into the state's vast philanthropic and business communities to raise additional resources to meet the educational needs of our children. LULAC itself offers many educational programs in our community, such as an after school program for 9th & 10th graders, our "Mommy & Me" Pre-K ESL program and an additional ESL program for children ages 5+. Including the

Education Tax Credit will help continue to support programs like these, not only for our community but for countless other after-school programs who can provide arts, athletic, music, tutoring and other essential programs to students from a diverse range of backgrounds. In conjunction with nearby public schools, this credit will allow us to raise more philanthropic dollars to serve more children and to provide a well-rounded education that meets the needs of our youth.

We here at LULAC not only support the Educational Tax Credit but also its relationship to the Dream Act, as we truly feel that this credit can be an important cornerstone in improving the lives within the Hispanic community. We also understand that while the credit is an answer to some of our issues, we need to go further to help communities like the ones that we serve to provide appropriate policies that will not only improve educational opportunities for our youth but also address other issues, such as affordable housing and relative increases on the minimum wage. But its understood that this credit will be a necessary step in the right direction.

The education of children (particularly those from low-income households, immigrant families and underserved communities) demands a greater share of state and local resources for the public schools that serve these needs.

To that end, we believe also in using the state's tax code to encourage individuals and businesses to do more for higher-need, underserved children and communities.

Overall, we are pleased with the Governor's approach to ensure that any scholarship funds made eligible for the receiving tax-credit donations be used for children from low-income communities. Since New York State has tax credits for businesses, the entertainment industry, green energy initiatives and countless other areas, there should be no problem adding the education of children to that list.

LULAC believes strongly that for a more just and fair society, educational access and opportunity is the right of every child, born in this country or immigrated to this country. We are committed to fighting against the growing gap between the wealthy and poor in our city and state.

We will lose that battle unless we address the educational inequality that is pervasive within our city and throughout our state.

Thank you.