

Puerto Rico, Puerto Ricans | Connecticut

Creating a Collective Agenda

**Connecticut Legislative
Office Building**

Saturday, 11 January 2025

Inaugural Summit Program

About

The goal of the *Puerto Rico, Puerto Ricans/Connecticut* summit is to provide a safe space for the discussion of policy issues and the articulation of community responses, to develop a collective agenda, that can address the particular experiences of Puerto Ricans in Connecticut. We would like to bring together the perspectives of stateside Puerto Ricans and other stakeholders in Connecticut to develop a collective agenda that can help shape public policies and legislation that address the inequalities experienced by Puerto Ricans in Connecticut.

Who We Are

The *Puerto Rican Studies Initiative for Community Engagement and Public Policy (PRSI)* is a research initiative seeking to document and support Puerto Ricans' vital economic, intellectual, and cultural contributions to Connecticut and provide research-based support for the development of public policies addressing the needs of Puerto Ricans in the State of Connecticut.

Founded in 2023, the *Puerto Rican and Latino Caucus* is a legislative caucus in the Connecticut General Assembly organized to address the needs of Puerto Ricans and Latinos in the State of Connecticut.

The most recent U.S. Census data available (2022) suggests that Puerto Rican and Latino residents of Connecticut account for 18.2% of the state's population or by now close to a fifth of the state's residents. Puerto Ricans account for 8.2% of this population, while various other Latino groups make up the remaining 10%. As UConnPRSI has documented, Puerto Ricans consistently experience the highest inequalities among all racial and ethnic groups in the state, including compared to Latinos. The goal of this summit is to retake the conversation on how to develop a Puerto Rican collective agenda for the state of Connecticut. The goal of the *Puerto Rico, Puerto Ricans/Connecticut* summit is to provide a safe space for the discussion of policy issues and the articulation of community responses, to develop a collective agenda, that can address the particular experiences of Puerto Ricans in Connecticut. We would like to bring together the perspectives of stateside Puerto Ricans and other stakeholders in Connecticut to develop a collective agenda that can help shape public policies and legislation that address the inequalities experienced by Puerto Ricans in Connecticut.

To achieve this goal the summit program is designed to balanced topics related to the economic, electoral, social and political issues affecting Puerto Ricans in Connecticut. The first part of the conference will take place on Saturday morning and will provide a demographic and political overview of the status of Puerto Ricans in Connecticut. The second part of the conference will take place after lunch and will provide a series of breakout sessions to address some of these concerns. We are interested in developing an agenda to move forward with coalition building and discuss how the Puerto Rican and Latino Caucus, elected officials, community leaders, other stakeholders, and UConn's Puerto Rican Studies Initiative can collaborate to help develop a collective agenda for improving the lives of Puerto Ricans in Connecticut.

CONTEXT

- What do we know about Puerto Ricans in Connecticut?
- What are key policies that can help improve the lives of Puerto Ricans in Connecticut?
- What can policies and community strategies do improve the lives of Puerto Ricans in Connecticut?



Program

8:00 – 9:00am Coffee and Registration

9:00 – 9:40am Welcome Remarks

- State Representative Minnie Gonzalez, **Connecticut General Assembly**
- Dr. Charles R. Venator-Santiago, **UConnPRSI**
- State Representative Matt Ritter, Speaker of the House, **Connecticut General Assembly**
- Governor Ned Lamont, **State of Connecticut (Invited)**
- Senator John Fonfara, **Connecticut General Assembly (Invited)**

9:40-10:10am Introductory Overview

- Dr. Charles R. Venator-Santiago, **UConnPRSI**

Goal: To provide a framework for the summit - Why are we here today? How do the panels and breakout session structure the conference. Discuss importance of addressing core questions in group discussions: What do we know about Puerto Ricans in Connecticut? Explain goals for the conference and expectations for the future.

10:10 – 10:25am Coffee Break

10:25 -11:00am Plenary Panel: Connecticut Puerto Rican and Latino Caucus

- State Representative Minnie Gonzalez, **Connecticut General Assembly**
- State Representative Geraldo Reyes, **Connecticut General Assembly**
- State Representative Jason Rojas, **Connecticut General Assembly**
- State Representative Hilda Santiago, **Connecticut General Assembly**
- State Representative Juan Candelaria, **Connecticut General Assembly**
- State Representative Manny Sanchez, **Connecticut General Assembly**
- State Representative Jimmy Sanchez, **Connecticut General Assembly**
- State Representative Chris Rosario, **Connecticut General Assembly**

Goal: To provide an overview of what the Puerto Rican and Latino Legislative Caucus legislators are doing in Connecticut today and what are their priorities. What is key legislation that affect Puerto Ricans in Connecticut? What can policies and community strategies do?

Concurrent Sessions 1

11:00am – 12:15pm

Concurrent Sessions. Concurrent breakout sessions promote active and deliberative engagement of multiple stakeholders in the solution of urgent social problems and add the development of community and policy strategies. The PRSI and PR&LLC main goals as organizations is to cultivate relations with a broad constituency, which is understood to be essential to carrying our mission. For our purposes, we consider business, nonprofit organizations, elected officials, academics, the media and community leaders to be essential stakeholders to our mission. The breakout sessions are organized by groups that represent the existing organizational structure of the Puerto Rican community in Florida.

The common questions posed to breakout sessions are:

- **What can we do?** The groups will be asked to evaluate the potential for research and advocacy to have an impact on the definition and understanding of social, economic, and policy problems; the window of opportunity opened to policy and community leaders concerned with the implementation of solutions to the problem; and the likelihood of affecting public policies and mediating social institutions that influence outcomes for Connecticut Puerto Rican communities.
- **Who is going to do it?** The conference will help produce an inventory of resources, a directory of individuals and organizations that can collaborate in the near future (within the next year after the conference) to support projects that would result in relevant research, promote the utilization of that research by stakeholders, and assess discernable impact on social outcomes.
- **What can the PRSI, and the PR&LLC do?** Puerto Ricans in Connecticut have garnered more political power than any other state in the nation. Puerto Ricans in Connecticut have the highest representations of elected officials than any other state. This power has motivated the Connecticut Puerto Rican communities to engage in a broad range of issues and strategies all with the common goal of strengthening the voices of Puerto Ricans in the state. The PRSI and PR&LLC could play a unique role as a convener and network builder, as a think tank and source of reliable information, and as a documentarian of the process.

Concurrent Panel 1 Public Hearing Room 1A

Puerto Ricans and the State of K-12 Education in Connecticut

Moderator

- State Representative Manny Sanchez, **Connecticut General Assembly**

Panel

- Superintendent Leslie Torres-Rodriguez, **Hartford Public Schools**
- Superintendent Madeline Negrón, **New Haven Public Schools**
- Nitza Diaz, **State Education Resource Center**

Goal: To examine disparities in education, issues affecting the educational pipeline, expectations about federal reform at the local level, and prospects for bilingual education. How do we retain students? How do we increase graduation rates? What should be a collective agenda for Puerto Ricans around K-12 education?

**Concurrent Panel 2
Public Hearing
Room 1B**

The 2024 Elections, An Explanation

Moderator

- State Representative Hilda E. Santiago, **Connecticut General Assembly**

Panel

- Edwin Vargas, **Governor William A. O'Neill Endowed Chair in Public Policy and Practical Politics, Central Connecticut State University**
- Alderman Ruben Rodriguez, **City of Waterbury**
- Marc Caplan, **CT Citizens Action Group**

Goal: To explain and discuss the results of the 2024 Presidential elections. To provide recommendations for Puerto Rican voters in Connecticut.

**Concurrent Panel 3
Public Hearing
Room 1C**

Housing Inequalities

Moderator

- State Representative Jason Rojas, **Connecticut General Assembly**

Panel

- Commissioner Seila Bruno-Mosquera, **Connecticut Commissioner of Housing**
- Councilwoman Maly Rosado, **City of Hartford**
- Wildaliz Bermudez, Executive Director of Fair Rent, **City of New Haven**
- Lee Osorio, **City of New Haven Field Representative**

Goal: To identify current issues affecting Puerto Ricans access to affordable housing and to explain available programs.

**Concurrent Panel 4
Public Hearing
Room 1D**

Connecticut Boards, Councils, and Commissions

Roundtable

- State Representative Minnie Gonzalez, **Connecticut General Assembly**
- State Representative Chris Rosario, **Connecticut General Assembly**
- Giselle "Gigi" Feliciano, **Registrar of Voters – Hartford**

Goal: To explain what the various Boards, Councils and Commissions in the State of Connecticut are and explain how more Puerto Ricans could join these bodies.

Concurrent Panel 5
Public Hearing
Room 1E

Health Inequalities and Community Strategies

Moderator

- State Representative Juan Candelaria, **Connecticut General Assembly**

Panel

- Ken Barela, **Hispanic Health Council**
- Dr. Tina Loarte, Connecticut **Center for Nursing Workforce, Inc.**
- Dr. Angela Bermudez Millan, **Public Health Sciences, University of Connecticut, Farmington**
- Dr. Anna-Michelle McSorley, **Department of Allied Health Sciences, University of Connecticut, Waterbury**

Goal: To examine health disparities, especially in key areas such as diabetes and its relations to nutrition, asthma, and mental health policies and effective preventive community strategies. Of special interest are the enrollment of Puerto Ricans in health plans, especially Medicare and Medicaid.

12:15 – 1:15pm

Networking Lunch

- **National Puerto Rican Agenda Table**
 - **Connecticut Latina Leadership Table**
 - **Environmental Justice Table**
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Concurrent Sessions 2

1:15pm – 2:10pm

Concurrent Panel 6
Public Hearing
Room 1A

Environmental Justice in Connecticut

Moderator

- State Representative Geraldo Reyes, **Connecticut General Assembly**

Panel

- Dr. Mayra Rodríguez González, **Urban and Community Forestry, University of Connecticut**
- Marilynn Aponte-Cruz, **Connecticut Government Leader and Executive Public Administrator (Retired)**
- Diana Martinez, **Katal Center for Equity, Health, and Justice**

Goal: To explain Puerto Ricans are impacted by environmental issues in Connecticut. To explore how Puerto Ricans in Connecticut can develop a collective agenda that incorporates approaches that promote environmental awareness and justice.

**Concurrent Panel 7
Public Hearing
Room 1B**

Puerto Rican Women and Leadership in Connecticut

Moderator

- Councilwoman Jessee Muñiz-Poland, **Councilwoman- Manchester**

Panel

- Kay Muñoz, **President-CT Hispanic Democratic Caucus**
- Evelyn Mantilla, **Former State Representative/Executive Director - ITN Central CT**
- Councilwoman Rose Reyes, **Councilwoman – Willimantic**
- Marilyn Alverio, **Founder and CEO, Latinas and Power Corp.**

Goal: To examine some of the challenges and contributions that Puerto Rican women leaders face in Connecticut. To develop a collective Puerto Rican agenda that incorporates the visions, perspectives and goals of Puerto Rican women, while promoting the expansion of leadership opportunities of Puerto Rican women in Connecticut.

**Concurrent Panel 8
Public Hearing
Room 1C**

Puerto Rican Day Parades and Collective Memory

Moderator

- Joe Rodriguez, **PRU-Puerto Rican Festival of New Haven**

Roundtable of Connecticut Puerto Rican Day Parade Leaders

- Sammy Vega, **CICD Greater Hartford Puerto Rican Day Parade**
- Amilcar Hernandez, **CICD Greater Hartford Puerto Rican Day Parade**
- Milta Feliciano, **Puerto Rican Parade of Fairfield County**
- Joe Rodriguez, **PRU-Puerto Rican Festival of New Haven**
- **Members of the CT Coalition of Puerto Rican Parade and Festivals Committees**

Goal: To explore ways that we can collaborate with the various Puerto Rican day parades throughout the state of Connecticut. To discuss ways that the Puerto Rican Day Parades can contribute to the development of a collective agenda for Puerto Ricans in Connecticut.

**Concurrent Panel 9
Public Hearing
Room D**

Puerto Ricans and the Media in Connecticut

Moderator

- State Representative Jimmy Sanchez, **Connecticut General Assembly**

Roundtable of Connecticut Puerto Rican Day Parade Leaders

- Ana Alfaro, El Show de Analeh, **Univision**
- Sabrina Herrera, Latino Initiative, **Connecticut Public**
- Vanessa de la Torre, **Chief Content Officer at Connecticut Public**

Goal: To discuss how the media promotes an understanding of issues affecting Puerto Ricans and how Puerto Ricans are part of the state.

Concurrent Panel 10
Public Hearing
Room 1E

Puerto Ricans and Higher Education, Hispanic Serving Institutions

Roundtable of Hispanic Serving Institutions in Connecticut

- President Zulma R. Toro, **Central Connecticut State University**
- Dean Fumiko Hoeft, **University of Connecticut, Waterbury**
- Dean Mark Overmyer-Velazquez, **University of Connecticut, Hartford**

Goal: To explain what are Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI) in Connecticut and how Puerto Rican students can benefit from attending an HSI. To develop a collective agenda to support HSIs in Connecticut in order to encourage Puerto Rican students to pursue higher education.

Wrapping Up
2:20-3:30pm

Closing Plenary: **What Have We Learned, Where Do We Go From Here?**

Moderators: Representative Minnie Gonzalez and Charles R. Venator-Santiago

In this session, moderators of each breakout session present a brief summary of conference participants' view on "What can the UConnPRSI and the PR&LLC can do to support growing interest to support Puerto Ricans in Connecticut. What should be the priorities as conveners and network builders, as think tanks and sources of reliable information, and as catalysts of the solidarity movement? How do these roles benefit specific community groups given the state of their sector institutions and priorities as a social movement? Describe three issues that should be a priority?

Adjourn

We need to vacate the LOB by 4:00pm

For more information, please contact Charles R. Venator-Santiago at either charles.venator@uconn.edu or at 413-219-5933.

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For more information, please visit our website:
puerto-rican-studies-initiative.clas.uconn.edu

