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-PRESS RELEASE-

MERRILL PRAISES UNANIMOUS SENATE APPROVAL OF BILL PROHIBITING NON- ATTORNEYS FROM ADVERTISING THEMSELVES AS ‘NOTARIO PUBLICO’

SECRETARY OF THE STATE ENCOURAGES GOVERNOR MALLOY TO SIGN MEASURE TO
REDUCE CONFUSION IN SPANISH-SPEAKING COMMUNITIES OVER PERFORMANCE OF
LEGAL SERVICES AND IMPOSES PENALTIES FOR UNLICENSED PRACTICE OF LAW

HARTFORD: Secretary of the State Denise Merrill today praised the Connecticut State Senate’s Unanimous passage of House Bill No. 5513 “An Act Concerning the Unauthorized Practice of Law by Notaries Public” which is designed to reduce fraudulent representation of legal services in Spanish-speaking communities by Notaries Public who advertise themselves as a “Notario Publico” in Spanish. In many Spanish-speaking countries, a “*notario publico*” is authorized to perform certain services that in the United States are reserved to licensed attorneys. There have been numerous complaints that a number of notaries public in Connecticut have been advertising themselves as a *Notario Publico* in Spanish, potentially leaving the impression with unwitting clients that the notaries can perform certain legal duties – such as assistance with immigration matters – that would amount to practicing law without a license.

“I commend the Senate for giving unanimously approving this bill that aims to reduce confusion in the Hispanic community as to who is allowed to practice law,” said Secretary Merrill, whose office oversees the licensing and discipline for Notaries Public in Connecticut. “I encourage Governor Malloy to sign this measure into law when it gets to his desk so we can clarify that only a licensed attorney can perform certain functions such as provide legal advice on immigration matters. It is very important for the Spanish-speaking public to understand: a *Notario Publico* is not necessarily a Notary Public or an attorney licensed to practice law in Connecticut.”

House bill No. 5513, was approved by the State House of Representatives on April 10, 2013. If signed into law by Governor Malloy, the bill would prohibit a notary public from offering or

providing legal advice in immigration matters, or representing someone in immigration proceedings, unless the notary public is (1) an attorney admitted to the Connecticut bar or (2) authorized by federal regulations to practice immigration law or represent people in immigration proceedings. The bill also prohibits a notary public from assuming, using, or advertising the title of *notario* or *notario publico* unless he or she (1) is an attorney admitted to the Connecticut bar or (2) indicates in an advertisement or otherwise provides written notice that he or she is not a state-licensed attorney. Under the bill, any notary public who violates these provisions is deemed to have violated the prohibition on the unauthorized practice of law and is subject to the penalties that apply to unauthorized practice of law. If enacted, the bill would take effect on October 1, 2013.