



State of Connecticut
COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

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CHRO

"Equality and Justice"

**Testimony of R. Hamisi Ingram
Executive Director
Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities**

March 24, 2006

Raised Bill No. 5597: An Act Concerning Discrimination

The Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities (CHRO) supports raised Bill 5597, *An Act Concerning Discrimination*, which would extend statutory protections against discrimination to claims of discrimination based on gender identity or expression. It would bar such discrimination in employment, housing and public accommodations, as well as in several other contexts. The bill essentially codifies a Declaratory Ruling in the matter of John/Jane Doe, which the commission issued on November 15, 2000. In that ruling, the commission held that discrimination based on gender identity or expression would violate Connecticut's ban on sex discrimination. Adding to the statute specific language with respect to gender identity or expression simply underscores the state's commitment to all of its citizens.

CHRO also supports the provision in the bill that would add "sexual orientation" to the class bases set forth in CONN. GEN. STAT. § 46a-58(a), Connecticut's deprivation of rights statute. Its purpose is to give full meaning to the decision of the Connecticut Supreme Court in Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities v. Board of Education of the Town of Cheshire, 270 Conn. 665 (2004). There, the Court held that the Commission, through section 46a-58(a), could investigate complaints of discrimination filed by students against their school districts. While discrimination against students based on sexual orientation is prohibited in our education statutes, in order to reach that statute, section 46a-58(a) needs to be amended to include sexual orientation as well. Recent studies have shown that a good deal of discrimination to which a student might be subjected in school is based on sexual orientation, or perceived sexual orientation. These studies show that such discrimination is much more prevalent in the schools than is discrimination based on race or ancestry.

CHRO strongly urges a joint favorable report on Raised Bill 5597. Thank you for your consideration of CHRO's views in this matter.