



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. 5733: An Act Concerning Mandatory Fact Finding
Conferences Conducted by the Commission on Human
Rights and Opportunities and the Duties of the Chief
Human Rights Referee**

The Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities (CHRO) supports Raised Bill 5733, *An Act Concerning Mandatory Fact-Finding Conferences Conducted by the CHRO*. It is intended to bring efficiencies, in both time and dollars, to the complaint investigation process. Currently, if a respondent or a complainant declines to participate in a fact-finding conference, one of the principal tools in the investigation process, CHRO's only options are to proceed without the participation of the absent party, or issue subpoenas to compel their attendance. If a party ignores a subpoena, CHRO must seek a court order compelling compliance; if that fails, the commission can seek a contempt order. This is an extremely costly and time-consuming process.

This bill would permit CHRO to default a respondent who fails to attend a fact-finding conference without good cause, or dismiss a complaint if a complainant fails to attend a fact-finding conference without good cause. Currently, CHRO can default a respondent who fails to answer a complaint, who fails to respond to a subpoena for the production of records, who fails to appear at public hearing or who fails to attend a mediation meeting. A complaint can be dismissed if a complainant fails to attend a mediation meeting without good cause, or fails to appear at public hearing. This bill would simply extend the ability to default or dismiss upon failure of either party to attend a fact-finding conference. It also provides an appeal right for either party from any such dismissal or default.

Raised Bill 5733 would also transfer certain duties, such as providing notice of a public hearing and the assignment of a presiding referee, from the CHRO executive director to the Chief Human Rights Referee, where they more properly belong.

CHRO urges a joint favorable report on Raised Bill 5733. Thank you for your consideration of the CHRO's views in this matter.