



State of Connecticut  
COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

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"Equality and Justice"

**Testimony of Raymond P. Pech  
Executive Director  
Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities**

**February 23, 2007**

**Raised Bill No. 1109: An Act Concerning Deprivation of Rights on Account  
of Sexual Orientation**

The Commission supports Raised Bill No. 1109, *An Act Concerning the Deprivation of Rights on Account of Sexual Orientation*.

Currently, section 46a-58(a) enables the Commission to investigate certain discriminatory practices that are unlawful under state and federal laws that are not set forth in chapter 814c. Two years ago, a Connecticut Supreme Court decision, Cheshire Board of Education v. Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities, validated this statute, and held that the Commission, through section 46a-58(a), could investigate complaints of discrimination filed by students against their school districts, as certain acts of discrimination are unlawful pursuant to section 10-15c of the general statutes. While discrimination against students based on sexual orientation is prohibited in that section, in order to reach that statute, section 46a-58(a) needs to be amended to include sexual orientation as well.

There is much anecdotal and documented evidence of harassment of students based on sexual orientation at a critical time when students are coming to grips with their sexuality. 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.

Section 46a-58(a) currently contains several prohibited bases of discrimination, but sexual orientation is not among them. This bill would codify the holding in the Cheshire Board of Education case, and make clear that the Commission can investigate all bases of discrimination against a student that are prohibited by the department of education's own prohibitions as set forth in section 10-15c.

Thank you for your consideration of the Commission's views on this matter. The Commission urges the Committee's joint favorable report on Raised Bill 1109.