



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**

**Public Health Committee  
February 21, 2007**

**Raised Bill 1066, An Act Concerning the Department of Mental Health and  
Addiction Services**

This is a multi-faceted bill, consisting of twenty-one sections. The Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities has no position on most of this bill. However, the Commission does oppose Section 20.

Section 20 would permit the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DHMAS) to file one affirmative action plan, covering all of its facilities, with the Commission. Currently, seven facilities of DHMAS each files its own plan. Last year, an eighth facility, previously unknown to the Commission, was added. The Department in the past has requested the Commission to permit such a consolidation, and the Commission has consistently opposed the idea.

While the Commission understands the Department's desire to consolidate all of its plans into one, we are concerned that the proposal will not have the desired effect of heightening compliance with the goals of affirmative action. Our primary concern stems from our understanding that the executive head of each of the Department's facilities is the final authority for all hiring and other staffing decisions made with respect to that facility. That being the case, it is our belief that having a specific affirmative action plan, tailored to the particular needs of each facility, would best insure that affirmative action goals would be met. We also believe that having each hiring authority directly responsible for his or her own plan results in a greater sense of responsibility for the implementation of that plan. One large plan, authored in the central office, covering all DHMAS facilities, would be awkward and cumbersome, with eight different people ultimately responsible simultaneously for its application. The sense of personal responsibility, on the part of each decision-maker, would be lost.

The Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities appreciates the opportunity to express its views on Section 20 of this bill.