

CONNECTICUT LEGAL RIGHTS PROJECT

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Testimony of Susan Aranoff, J.D. Staff Attorney Connecticut Legal Rights Project, Inc. Before the Judiciary Committee

Good afternoon distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee. I am Susan Aranoff, Staff Attorney at Connecticut Legal Rights Project and I am here today to speak in support of **H.B. 5534 An Act Prohibiting Discrimination on the Basis of Mental Disability in State Contracts.**

Connecticut Legal Rights Project, Inc. is a non-profit legal services agency that provides individual and systemic legal services to indigent adults who have, or are perceived as having, psychiatric disabilities and who receive, or are eligible to receive, services from the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services.

Connecticut Legal Rights Project maintains offices at all DMHAS operated in-patient and out-patient facilities in the state. Our offices are staffed by attorneys and paralegal advocates. I provide legal services to individual clients and I supervise four paralegals. My testimony today is informed by my expertise in the area of patients' rights, in general, and my direct experiences in Connecticut.

Every contract to which the state or any political subdivision thereof is a party must contain provisions which prohibit discrimination on the base of such things as race, religion, and sex. Raised Bill 5534 adds "mental disability" to the list of impermissible bases for discrimination. By so doing, H.B. 5534 ensures that the non-discrimination

provisions of the statutes governing state contracts are consistent with Connecticut's other non-discrimination statutes.

Apparently the category of mental disability was inadvertently omitted from the list of prohibited forms of discrimination. Also, when several closely related statutes are read together it appears that state contractors are prohibited from discriminating on the basis of mental disability by other provisions of law.

Nevertheless, HB 5534 makes it crystal clear that discrimination based upon mental disability is prohibited. Accordingly, CLRP strongly supports its passage