



State of Connecticut
COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Central Office ~ 21 Grand Street, Hartford, CT 06106

Promoting Equality and Justice for all People

**GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATIONS AND ELECTIONS COMMITTEE
MARCH 23, 2009**

Good morning, Senator Slossberg, Representative Spallone and members of the Government Administrations and Elections Committee. My name is Bob Brothers. I am the Acting Executive Director of the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities.

The Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities **SUPPORTS HJ 1, A RESOLUTION EXPRESSING THE PROFOUND REGRET OF THE CONNECTICUT GENERAL ASSEMBLY FOR THE HISTORY OF WRONGS INFLICTED UPON BLACK CITIZENS BY MEANS OF SLAVERY, EXPLOITATION AND LEGALIZED RACIAL SEGREGATION, AND CALLING ON ALL CITIZENS TO TAKE PART IN ACTS OF RACIAL RECONCILIATION**

As the oldest state government civil rights agency in the United States we welcome this resolution, particularly the re-endorsement of the state's commitment "to work daily to treat all persons with abiding respect for their humanity and to eliminate racial prejudices, injustices and discrimination from our society."

Connecticut can be proud of its role in bringing slavery to an end – individuals of Connecticut gave shelter to runaway slaves in communities along the underground railway and Connecticut was the first state to ratify the fourteenth amendment to the Constitution of the United States.

There is little we can do about the past but there is a great deal we can do about the future. This resolution reminds us that if we are going to move forward we need to acknowledge the past.

We must join together to bring equality and justice to all who call this great state home. Over the years as the profound message of Dr. King and the Civil Rights movement swept through America where today the state defends people not just on the basis of race but our law includes color, religious creed, age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, national origin, ancestry, present or past history of mental disability, mental retardation, learning disability or physical disability, and we hope this year the General Assembly will add gender identity.

On a daily basis we, as this resolution advocates, "work for the elimination of residual structures of racism that continue to exist in our state." A small staff of fewer than 100 does its best to monitor the human rights of more than 3 million residents of Connecticut.

We hope that you will help us continue on this journey to provide equality and reconciliation.