

Memo

To: Commerce Committee
From: Robert J. Brothers, Jr., Executive Director
Date: February 21, 2012
Re: **SB 79, AN ACT CONCERNING UNEMPLOYED INDIVIDUALS AND
DISCRIMINATORY HIRING PRACTICES**

The Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities opposes discrimination in all its forms.

Particularly in these days of high unemployment and low job creation potential employers may allow a person's unemployment status to be viewed as a reflection of the person's work performance ability. This is unfair in a weakened economy where many workers are faced with unemployment through no fault of their own.

However, adding the unemployed to the classes protected the CHRO has jurisdiction of under state law is problematic.

It is unclear how the Commission would determine whether a prejudice against the unemployed could have existed in a particular company or organization given the high number of unemployed applicants for every vacant job. While there is precedence to substantiate other biases such as race or age, how such could be determined for the unemployed is hard to imagine.

The bigger issue is that the CHRO simply does not have the resources to open the flood gates to these types of complaints in our agency. With 154,500 Connecticut residents presently unemployed if only 1% of them were to file a complaint with the Commission it would nearly double our caseload. This would crush an agency with 20% of its authorized staffing levels presently unfilled. CHRO has not been allowed to fill a vacant position since 2008. At one time we were a staff of nearly 120 employees, now we currently are down to 65. Adding a new large class of potential Complainants would be devastating to the citizens that we are already charged with serving.

While the Commission believes that the State must do what it can to get citizens back to work, it must oppose this bill on fiscal grounds.