

**Testimony on Behalf of
the Connecticut Regional Office of
the Anti-Defamation League**

**IN OPPOSITION TO
PORTIONS OF HB 6354
AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE GOVERNOR'S BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS
CONCERNING GENERAL GOVERNMENT**

March 22, 2013

The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) was founded in 1913 with a mandate to fight the defamation of the Jewish people and secure justice and fair treatment for all. Today the ADL is one of the country's leading civil rights and human services organizations. This year, we are celebrating our Centennial and asking all people of good will to "Imagine A World Without Hate." The Connecticut Regional Office of ADL is based in Hamden and serves the entire state of Connecticut.

We submit this testimony today to express our opposition to the portions of HB 6354 that would consolidate the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission, the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women, the Commission on Children, the African-American Affairs Commission and the Asian Pacific American Affairs Commission into a new agency within the legislative branch titled the Commission on Citizen Advocacy. We support the maintenance of these Commissions as separate entities in Connecticut's state government.

These individual Commissions are an invaluable resource to the community and provide an important voice representing the interests of African-Americans, Latinos, women, Asian Pacific Americans and children in the state. Their role in monitoring legislation, helping to develop significant policy and initiatives, providing information and conducting research, and holding government accountable is vital to serving the needs of their respective communities. Their existence as separate entities is of particular importance, since many of their constituents may not be in a position to retain private lobbyists or others to speak on their behalf, and they may otherwise have no presence or participation in the state's lawmaking process. Although the interests of the groups represented by these distinct Commissions may often be allied, they are clearly not identical. Each group has distinct issues and concerns that are best served by having distinct Commissions. We are mindful of the necessity of exploring ways to make the government more efficient and economical. However, we believe that the cost savings associated with this bill will be far outweighed by the losses experienced by the groups in our state which benefit from having distinct Commissions.

In ADL's efforts to fight hate, build hope and safeguard liberty, we work with the Commissions on a regular basis. The Commissions are key partners for ADL in our work monitoring and advocating on behalf of legislation relating to hate crimes, immigration and discrimination. The Commission on Children is an important ally in our work providing anti-bias and diversity education programming to tens of thousands of children in Connecticut – including more than 20,000 last year alone – providing assistance, insight and guidance in this vital area. Partners like

the Commissions are essential to ADL's pursuit of justice and fair treatment for all in Connecticut, and to the well-being of African-American, Latino, female and Asian Pacific American individuals, as well as children and others throughout the state.

We urge you to reject the portions of HB 6354 that would consolidate the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission, the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women, the Commission on Children, the African-American Affairs Commission and the Asian Pacific American Affairs Commission into a new agency titled the Commission on Citizen Advocacy. We urge you to maintain these Commissions' important presence as separate entities in Connecticut's state government.