



**STATE OF CONNECTICUT**  
*DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES*  
*A Healthcare Service Agency*

Dannel P. Malloy  
Governor

Patricia A. Rehmer, MSN  
Commissioner

**Testimony by Patricia Rehmer, MSN, Commissioner**  
**Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services**  
**Before the Judiciary Committee**  
**March 5, 2014**

Good morning Senator Coleman, Representative Fox, and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee I am Patricia Rehmer, Commissioner of the Department of Mental health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) and I am here this morning to speak in support of **HB 5367 AN ACT CONCERNING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ENHANCED PROTECTIONS AGAINST DISCRIMINATION**. I want to thank the committee for your assistance in raising this proposal.

HB 5367 would add persons with “mental disabilities” to the other protected classes in state statute. The inclusion of “mental disabilities” supports the Department’s mission of eliminating stigma and discrimination towards individuals with behavioral health disorders, and is consistent with Connecticut’s trend in providing equal protections to all individuals.

Discrimination against individuals with behavioral health disorders is a serious and persistent issue in Connecticut. Last year, DMHAS sponsored a photo display in the LOB walkway that highlighted the instances of discrimination these individuals are faced with on a daily basis. We are aware of individuals being denied access to housing, jobs and even treatment because of their illness.

Anecdotally, it has also come to our attention that last year, an individual with a psychiatric disability was prevented from bringing a discrimination action because this class of individuals is not included in the current statute.

Thank you for the opportunity to address the committee on this issue. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.