STATE OF CONNECTICUT

OFFICE OF PROTECTION AND ADVOCACY FOR
PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES
60-B WESTON STREET, HARTFORD, CT 06120-1551

Testimony of the Office of Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities Before the Judiciary Committee

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Good morning Senator Coleman, Representative Fox, and members of the Judiciary Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on **HB 5367, An Act Concerning the Implementation of Enhanced Protections Against Discrimination.** HB 5367 proposes adding persons with mental disabilities to the protected classes in Connecticut General Statute §46a-58. It is also my understanding that the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities would like the same concept introduced in a comprehensive bill that would make technical adjustments for the agency. P&A supports the addition of "mental disability" to the protected classes. It is long overdue equal protection for a group that has been historically subjected to discrimination because of disability.

The Office of Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities (P&A) protects the civil and human rights of people with all types of disabilities in Connecticut. For the past 35 years, P&A advocates have provided information and referral, technical assistance and representation for people with mental illness who experienced discrimination in housing, employment, healthcare, recreation and other governmental and community programs and services. The stigma of mental illness continues to hamper true societal inclusion and acceptance of people with mental illness and HB 5367 will assist in eliminating discrimination against all people with disabilities in Connecticut.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak in support of **HB 5367, An Act Concerning the Implementation of Enhanced Protections Against Discrimination.**

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