

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

**IN SUPPORT OF RAISED BILL 5367:
AN ACT CONCERNING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ENHANCED PROTECTIONS
AGAINST DISCRIMINATION**

March 5, 2014

The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) wishes to express our support for HB 5367 and urges you to report this bill out with a favorable recommendation.

Founded in 1913 with a mandate to fight the defamation of the Jewish people and secure justice and fair treatment for all, ADL is one of the country's leading civil rights and human services organizations combating anti-Semitism and bigotry of all kinds. In recognizing that discrimination against any group threatens equality for all, ADL has consistently advocated for anti-discrimination laws, both at the state and federal level to include protections based on disability and gender identity or expression. By clarifying that "gender identity or expression" and "mental disability" are explicitly included in all of Connecticut's anti-discrimination laws, Connecticut would send a clear message to its citizens that all people are entitled to feel safe in their communities and to be offered the full and explicit protection of the law.

Connecticut's discrimination laws already provide significant protection for discrimination based on gender identity or expression and mental disability in areas of employment, housing and public accommodations. This bill would simply ensure consistency in the state laws by explicitly adding "mental disability" to the state's civil rights statute, Conn. Gen. Stat. §46a-58, and "gender identity or expression" and "mental disability" to the state's hate crime statute related to the display of a noose on public or private property, making it consistent with Connecticut's other hate crime statutes, Conn. Gen. Stat. §53a-181k, §53a-181l. By updating and clarifying protections under these statutes, this bill would maintain equal and unambiguous protection for all under the law. It does not create any special rights; it simply extends similar protections offered under existing state discrimination and hate crime laws.

A society is measured morally by its treatment of those less advantaged, of the persecuted and the victimized. We urge you to support this bill in order to make this simple change in the law that, with no fiscal impact, will send a clear message that no one deserves to suffer intimidation, harassment, property damage or discrimination in any form because of a mental disability or because of their gender identity or expression. Thank you for your consideration.