

## CONNECTICUT LEGAL RIGHTS PROJECT, INC.

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JUDICIARY COMMITTEE March 5, 2014

**Testimony of Sally R. Zanger, Staff Attorney, SUPPORTING Raised Bill No. 5367  
An Act Concerning the Implementation of Enhanced Protections Against Discrimination.**

Senator Coleman, Representative Fox, Senator Kissel distinguished members of the committee, I am a staff attorney with the Connecticut Legal Rights Project (CLRP), which is a legal services organization that advocates for low-income individuals in institutions and in the community who have, or are perceived to have, psychiatric disabilities. I am testifying today in support of Bill No. 5367.

This bill is very simple: Conn. General Statutes Sec. 46a-58, protects against deprivation of rights privileges and immunities to deprivations based on religion, national origin, alienage, color, race, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, blindness or physical disability. This bill extends the protections of Conn. General Statutes Sec. 46a-58 to **mental disability**.

In addition, bill amends paragraph (d) of the statute, which specifies that placing a noose or simulation thereof is a violation of the first paragraph. Bill 5367 conforms that paragraph with paragraph (a) by adding “mental disability” and “gender identity or expression.”

It is not at all clear why mental disability had not been in place already, but it was a serious omission that left my clients unprotected against discrimination that did not fall squarely into a specific remedial statute. This simple change solves that problem. The addition of “gender identity or expression” to paragraph (d) makes explicit the intent of the original language of the statute.

We urge you to pass this bill.

I note that there is also an 89 page comprehensive bill regarding the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities (CHRO) (No. 385) that is not before you today, that contains similar corrections of this statute and several others. The changes are fair and make good sense.

Respectfully Submitted

Sally R. Zanger  
Staff Attorney