



Judiciary Committee Public Hearing

Friday, March 20, 2015

RE: HB No. 5437 An Act Concerning the Alvin W. Penn Racial Profiling Prohibition Act

Testimony of Marji Lipshez-Shapiro,
Connecticut Interim Regional Director, Anti-Defamation League

In advance of the Judiciary Committee's hearing on "An Act Concerning the Alvin W. Penn Racial Profiling Prohibition Act," we write **in support of HB 5437** and to provide the Judiciary Committee with the Anti-Defamation League's position on this bill. We ask that this statement be made part of the formal hearing record.

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 ADL is one of the country's leading civil rights and human services organizations.

An essential element of ADL's mission of seeking justice and fair treatment for all people compels us to combat bias and discrimination in whatever form it takes and against whomever it may be directed. From our experience advocating for victims of discrimination and responding to bias incidents, we know that discrimination against any individual or group of people not only hurts the individuals and targeted groups, but also negatively affects the community as a whole. In other words, we all suffer when any group experiences bigotry or discrimination.

As a result of ADL's broad work with law enforcement officials combatting extremism and terrorism, fighting bias crime and discrimination, and training on core values, we have established extensive contacts with leaders of many law enforcement agencies across the country and within the State of Connecticut. Through our work with law enforcement, we have developed a deep appreciation of the professionalism, commitment, and integrity that the vast majority of the members of this profession bring to their work every day. These officers do not practice or condone the use of inappropriate profiling solely on the basis of race or religion as a criterion for criminal suspicion.

However, there is substantial evidence documenting that minority motorists are too frequently stopped for pretextual reasons and questioned disproportionately more often than white motorists. The use of race, ethnicity, or any such criterion as a sole basis for criminal suspicion in making traffic stops undermines public trust in law enforcement, widens the gulf that exists between white and minority perceptions of fairness, is a violation of the motorist's civil rights and stands in conflict with the core values of law enforcement.

ADL has long opposed stereotyping – a component of racial profiling – based on immutable characteristics. The League has specifically and repeatedly expressed concern about the effect of singling out entire groups as targets of suspicion. When the nation commemorated the tenth anniversary of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, the Anti-Defamation League, with Human Rights First and the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, collaborated on a joint [statement](#) on behalf of an extraordinarily diverse group of 71 religious, racial, ethnic, and civil and human rights organizations. The statement emphasized the particularly damaging manner in which racial profiling threatens to undermine efforts to promote safety and security.

Effective counterterrorism is important to everyone, but policies that divide communities, inflame fear and violate human rights undermine our nation's core values and our security. Some counterterrorism measures have resulted in insufficient adherence to constitutional protections and violations of human rights.

We know from experience that America's historic commitment to civil and human rights is not an impediment to public safety but rather offers a more enduring and effective approach by ensuring that communities are not alienated or scapegoated.

It is vitally important for this hearing – and any that may follow – to acknowledge and highlight the extraordinary efforts of federal, state, and local law enforcement officials to prevent and deter unlawful activity. However, law enforcement does not work in a vacuum. Officers cannot do their job without community relationships, trust, cooperation, and a shared sense of responsibility for public safety. We therefore encourage you to support to promote trust and reject unfair stereotyping by strengthening the Alvin W. Penn Racial Profiling Prohibition Act and voting in favor of HB 5437.