

**Testimony of Elissa Wright, Submitted to the  
Executive and Legislative Nominations Committee  
April 16, 2015**

Good morning, Senator Duff, Representative Janowski, Senator Kane, Representative Buck-Taylor, and members of the Executive and Legislative Nominations Committee. My name is Elissa Wright, and it is an honor and a privilege to be nominated by Governor Dannel P. Malloy for appointment as a Human Rights Referee. I am enthusiastic about this opportunity, and I would be pleased and honored to serve the state in this capacity if I am confirmed.

I have had the pleasure of working with many members of this committee during the past eight years, and I thank you for your consideration of my nomination. In my testimony today I would like to share some of the experiences that have shaped my career and my compassion and concern for those who seek justice and equal treatment before the law.

I grew up in a civically and politically engaged family in Noank, Connecticut, where I raised my two children and still live. Active in the community for many years, most recently I served four terms as State Representative for the 41<sup>st</sup> Assembly District. You will see from my resume that I was also an elected and appointed official in Groton town government for more than twenty years, as a member of the Town Council, Board of Education, Representative Town Meeting, and appointed bodies. My work in public service in state and local government has been driven by a commitment to sound policies that serve the cause of equal justice, enhance the quality of life, and contribute to a bright future for all of the residents of Connecticut, their children, and the generations of tomorrow.

My life has been enriched by a wonderful family, teachers, and mentors. My father, Mortimer Wright, a former state representative and longtime civic and political leader in Groton, believed strongly in the rule of law as equally applied and independently adjudicated. He instilled in me the special importance of civic engagement and encouraged my interest in the law and in the public service role of government. Following my graduation from UConn Law School, I had the invaluable opportunity of clerking for Connecticut Supreme Court Justice Ellen Ash Peters, whose tireless dedication to excellence, depth of scholarship, and legal precision has set standards for our courts — and for me personally.

I also have worked in the Connecticut judicial department as an assistant staff attorney for the Connecticut Supreme and Appellate Courts, preparing bench memoranda for the Supreme Court justices and Appellate Court judges, and as an assistant trial court clerk in the Connecticut Superior Court.

As an attorney and a legislator, I have considerable experience in evaluating and resolving complex questions in ways that are analytically sound, fundamentally fair, and inclusive. Anti-discrimination laws touch almost every segment of our economy and our lives. The state of Connecticut has been a leader within the United States in protecting individuals against discrimination and prohibiting discriminatory practices in a wide range of contexts, as well as extending legal protections to whistleblowers. I would be honored to lend my experience to the just and expeditious administrative adjudication of contested cases arising under our laws barring discrimination, and under our state whistleblower retaliation protection law, protecting the public interest as well as the human dignity and civil rights of individuals.

I am deeply grateful to Governor Malloy for the confidence he has shown in me and for the opportunity to be here today. If given the opportunity of serving the citizens of Connecticut as a Human Rights Referee, I will be committed to exhaustively researching, thoroughly examining, and deciding each contested case to the best of my ability in a way that is fair and impartial, open and efficient, intellectually and legally sound, and truly reflective of our shared values of justice for all.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.