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Testimony of CT Bar Association

In SUPPORT of

HB5229, An Act Changing Certain Reporting Requirements in the State Codes of Ethics

Government Administration & Election Committee

March 7, 2016

Good afternoon Senator Cassano, Representative Jutila, Senator McLachlan, Representative Smith and members of the Government Administration & Election Committee.

The Connecticut Bar Association (CBA) has taken an Association position to support HB5229. An Association position is taken only when proposed legislation affects virtually all attorneys in the CBA. The CBA represents almost 10,000 attorneys. The CBA was founded on June 2, 1875, and is the preeminent organization for lawyers and the legal profession in Connecticut. Through its members, the CBA is dedicated to promoting public service and advancing the principles of law and justice.

In advancing those principles, the CBA sponsors over 100 educational programs throughout the year as Continuing Legal Education (CLE) and in its section meetings with each being hosted for 25-100 people.

There are a number of government attorneys who are members of the CBA. There are a number who are not members. When planning our meetings we find that it would be beneficial to have a specific government attorney as a speaker or panelist for a meeting because this attorney has been involved in a specific situation, has vast knowledge about an issue, has tried the case, or has developed the statute or regulation. However, when asked to participate in our meeting/CLE for the CBA, the attorney declares to not want to be reported to Ethics. It has happened in more situations than you would think.

There are a number of government attorneys and state employees who could and should be involved in these meetings employed by the Attorneys General's Office, the State's Attorney, Public Defender, Legislative Commissioners Office, and the hundreds of members of the judicial branch including our judges.

We find that HB5229 creates a fix for the states employees and government attorneys to participate fully as described in the bill. It's a good bill, and we hope you will move it out of committee.