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**Written Testimony Supporting Senate Bill 197,  
An Act Concerning Veterans, Discriminatory Practices and  
The Commission On Human Rights And Opportunities  
February 23, 2016**

Senator Flexer, Representative Hennessy, and members of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs. My name is David McGuire, and I am the Legislative and Policy Director for the American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut (ACLU-CT). I submit this testimony in support of Senate Bill 197, An Act Concerning Veterans, Discriminatory Practices and The Commission On Human Rights And Opportunities. This bill fills two substantial gaps in Connecticut's anti-discrimination protections. First, it ensures that veterans will be treated no less honorably than any other member of the public in matters of employment, housing, public accommodation and credit. Second, it provides people who have suffered illegal employment discrimination with full and fair compensation for their losses.

The ACLU-CT strives to guarantee that every person in Connecticut has equal rights. Our veterans have put their lives and health on the line in order to serve Connecticut and our country. This sacrifice deserves respect, not discrimination. Currently, an employer in Connecticut may refuse to hire honorably job applicant and a restaurant or motel owner may refuse service or lodging, simply because of someone's status as a veteran. For example, before Chicago passed an ordinance to include veteran status in its list of protected classes, veterans in the area reported experiencing discrimination in accessing housing, as some landlords refused to accept federal GI Bill housing allowances or required pay stubs, rather than proof of incoming housing allowances, in order for veterans to show that their incomes would be stable enough to cover rent. This bill would have a meaningful impact on veterans and their families in Connecticut by outlawing this type of discrimination.

The second part of this bill allows any member of a protected class, including veterans, who have

suffered from employment discrimination to a full measure of relief, including compensatory damages and attorney's fees. It is important to note that almost all states with laws against employment discrimination provide this type of relief. Further, this type of relief is not foreign to our state. The Connecticut Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities already awards compensatory damages and attorney's fees in cases of housing discrimination, public accommodation discrimination, credit discrimination, and whistleblower retaliation. It is time for Connecticut to extend these meaningful provisions to employment discrimination.

Please support these important updates to Connecticut's anti-discrimination statute.