

GOVERNMENTAL ACCOUNTABILITY AND ELECTIONS  
Wednesday, February 15, 2017

**Testimony in Support of S.B. 482, An Act Concerning the Preparation of Racial and Ethnic Impact Statements**

Good morning/afternoon Senator Winfield, Senator McLachlan, Representative Fox and members of the Governmental Accountability and Elections Committee. My name is Cheryl Sharp and I am the Deputy Director of the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities and I am here to speak in favor of S.B. 482, An Act Concerning the Preparation of Racial and Ethnic Impact Statements.

The mission of the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities is to eliminate discrimination through civil and human rights law enforcement and to establish equal opportunity and justice for all persons within the state through advocacy and education. Conn. Gen. Stat. §2-24b already requires that a racial and ethnic impact statement be prepared with respect to certain bills and amendments that could, if passed, increase or decrease the pretrial or sentenced population of the correctional facilities in this state. This proposed bill would amend that statute to require a racial and ethnic impact statement to be prepared whenever requested by a legislator.

Many laws, intentionally or not, have an adverse impact on members of racial minority groups. These laws, which are neutral on their face, actually serve to perpetuate discrimination although the intent of the law was not to discriminate. Some examples include: height requirements for a job where height is not relevant to the job, but which serves to screen out women, Hispanic or Asian individuals; criminal background checks as a screening device that tend to screen out members of certain minority groups when the criminal record is not relevant to the job performed or housing sought; three strikes laws that provide harsher penalties for the third conviction of ANY crime. Where there is a less restrictive means of achieving the same goal (competent employees, tenants who pay the rent) that less restrictive means should be used.

Promulgating laws that do not discriminate against members of any protected groups is a laudable goal and CHRO supports this goal. It must be noted however, that while there may be a fiscal impact (as impact statements require a statistical analysis of the impact of the laws) any fiscal impact may be worth the cost to eliminate systemic discrimination. In the employment arena, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) provides policy statements on employment tests that may lead to adverse impacts in the work setting.<sup>1</sup> Laws affecting education, the criminal code, and a myriad of other topics can negatively impact one group more than others. It is important to know the impact of the laws that are passed to avoid unintentional consequences, especially when those consequences are frequently born by those with few or no resources to address them.

CHRO supports Senate Bill 482.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.eeoc.gov/policy/docs/factemployment\\_procedures.html](https://www.eeoc.gov/policy/docs/factemployment_procedures.html)