



# State of Connecticut COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 2, Hartford, CT 06103

*Promoting Equality and Justice for all People*

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## Judiciary Committee Public Hearing – February 21, 2020

### CHRO Testimony Regarding:

#### **SB 73 – An Act Repealing the Prohibition Against Ridicule of Another Person on Account of Creed, Religion, Color, Denomination, Nationality or Race**

Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom, Senator Kissel, Representative Rebimbas, and members of the Judiciary Committee, the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities appreciates the chance to submit testimony regarding SB 73, An Act Repealing the Prohibition Against Ridicule of Another Person on Account of Creed, Religion, Color, Denomination, Nationality or Race.

As the state agency tasked with eliminating discrimination through civil and human rights law enforcement and advocating for justice for all persons within the state, the CHRO opposes SB 73. This bill would repeal Section 53-37 of the Connecticut General Statutes which makes the ridicule of a person or group on account of creed, religion, color, denomination, nationality, race or class a class D misdemeanor. This statute aims to combat the bias and harassment that individuals may face on the basis of race or religion. At a time when hate and bias incidents are on the rise,<sup>1</sup> it is crucial that the state not remove these types of prohibitions that aim to deter or punish this unacceptable behavior.

The CHRO urges the committee to reject SB 73. Thank you again for the opportunity to submit testimony on this issue.

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<sup>1</sup> For example, the Stamford Advocate reported that the Anti-Defamation League announced that there were 58 reported extremist, white supremacist or anti-Semitic incidents in Connecticut in 2019. The number of propaganda efforts nationwide doubled in 2019 as compared with 2018. See <https://www.stamfordadvocate.com/middletown/article/ADL-reports-58-incidents-in-CT-in-2019-15069692.php>