



Legislative Testimony
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Written Testimony Supporting House Bill 5481, An Act Establishing a Grant Program for Women and Minority-Owned Businesses

Senator Hartley, Representative Cohen, Ranking Members Martin and Buckbee, and distinguished members of the Commerce Committee:

My name is Kelly McConney Moore, and I am the interim senior policy counsel for the American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut (ACLU-CT). I am submitting this testimony in support of House Bill 5481, An Act Establishing a Grant Program for Women and Minority-Owned Businesses.

The ACLU-CT is an organization committed to fighting for a world where Black people, Indigenous people, people of color, and women are afforded equal social, legal, and financial status to white men. COVID-19 has only highlighted how far from that world we are. Systemic inequalities in healthcare, employment, and state and federal pandemic responses have made marginalized people more vulnerable to death and harm from COVID-19. It is widely acknowledged that COVID-19 has been more infectious,¹ more likely to cause long-term health impacts,² and more lethal³ for Black and brown people in the U.S. than to white people. Women's health impacts are fewer, women have been disproportionately financially harmed by COVID-19.⁴ The gender discrepancies have not yet peaked. In December, all

¹ Excluding people of Asian ethnicity. *Id.*

² See Carmen Nesbitt & Liz Essley Whyte, "For some COVID patients, pre-existing conditions and long-term consequences part of the struggle." Center for Public Integrity, Jan. 31, 2021, *available at* <https://publicintegrity.org/health/coronavirus-and-inequality/pre-existing-conditions-long-term-consequences-covid-patients/>.

³ "Hospitalization and Death by Race/Ethnicity." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Nov. 30, 2020, *available at* <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/covid-data/investigations-discovery/hospitalization-death-by-race-ethnicity.html>.

⁴ See, e.g., Nicole Bateman & Martha Ross, "Why has COVID-19 been especially harmful for working women." Brookings Inst., Oct. 2020, *available at* <https://www.brookings.edu/essay/why-has-covid-19-been-especially-harmful-for-working-women/>; see also Kate Farrar, "'Stay home when sick' is out of reach for women." CT

140,000 nationwide job losses were for women; men gained 16,000 in that time period.⁵

Providing access to capital for women and minority-owned businesses who have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19 is a critical piece of pandemic recovery equity. Equity recognizes that, to get people to roughly proportionate outcomes, people who are especially vulnerable or who have been particularly oppressed will require more supports than groups which have been relatively privileged. Accordingly, affording grants to women- and POC-owned businesses is a necessary step towards creating an equitable COVID-19 response, since the effects to these groups has been – due to systemic racism and patriarchy – disproportionately worse. The ACLU-CT therefore supports HB 5481 and similar efforts to make sure that the people hurt worst by the pandemic are the ones whose recovery is most supported and prioritized. We urge this Committee to support this bill as well.

Mirror, Mar. 12, 2020, *available at* <https://ctmirror.org/category/ct-viewpoints/stay-home-sick-out-of-reach-for-women-kate-farrar/>.

⁵ See Annalyn Kurtz, “The U.S. economy lost 140,000 jobs in December. All of them were held by women.” CNN.com, Jan. 8, 2021, *available at* <https://www.cnn.com/2021/01/08/economy/women-job-losses-pandemic/index.html>.