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Written Testimony Supporting House Bill 5497, An Act Considering Gender Neutrality in the State Constitution and in Provisions of the General Statutes Relating to Municipal Elective Offices

Senator Flexer, Representative Fox, Ranking Members Sampson and Mastrofrancesco, and distinguished members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee:

My name is Jess Zaccagnino, and I am the policy counsel for the American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut (ACLU-CT). I am submitting this written testimony in support of House Bill 5497, An Act Considering Gender Neutrality in the State Constitution and in Provisions of the General Statutes Relating to Municipal Elective Offices.

The ACLU-CT is committed to ending discrimination against people of marginalized genders, and gender identities, including cisgender women, trans people, intersex people, and gender non-conforming people. When it comes to fundamental rights guaranteed by the Constitution of Connecticut, we believe that those rights and elective offices are not just for the people who use the “he/him/his” pronouns throughout the Constitution, but for everyone. While modern courts have generally agreed that the male usage in the Constitution is not a bar to rights for people who are not men, that does not mean we should stop striving for a more inclusive Constitution. To the contrary, the state Constitution is the document that fundamentally aims to “define, secure, and perpetuate the liberties, rights and privileges” of the people of Connecticut. We should reflect everyone, of all genders, in this esteemed document. Last year, we supported Public Act 21-17, which created a task force to recommend revisions to the Constitution of Connecticut that would preserve the current meaning while replacing gendered language with language that

affirms the rights and equality of people of all genders.¹ House Bill 5497 seeks to expand the charge of this already-established task force to also include a review of the general statutes relating to municipal elective offices. We encourage this Committee to support this effort as well.

¹ Since the purpose of House Bill 5497 is to affirm that all people are included in the state Constitution, we suggest that the task force's second mandate be to make language change recommendations to reiterate the equality of all people—not just citizens—before the law.