



Legislative Testimony
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Written Testimony Supporting House Bill 6077, An Act Establishing a Process for the Addition of Diverse Statues to the State Capitol Building

Senator Flexer, Representative Blumenthal, 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 writing to testify in support of House Bill 6077, An Act Establishing a Process for the Addition of Diverse Statues to the State Capitol Building.

The ACLU-CT believes in a society where all people have equal opportunity to contribute to society and to participate in democracy. But right now, if many residents of Connecticut were to visit their state capitol building, they would not be able to find a single statue that looks like them. Our capitol building's ornate façade is adorned with twenty-six gothic niches holding statues: all but one are of men, and all are white.¹ One statue is dedicated to John Mason, the architect of the Mystic Massacre of the Pequot Tribe, and whose violence has been the subject of scholarship on the genocide of Native Americans.² A number of the niches remain empty, waiting for new statues to honor Nutmeggers. Across the country and in Connecticut, people from historically marginalized groups, like people of color and women, are rarely

¹ The late Governor Ella Grasso is the only woman represented on our capitol building's façade. The other statutes are of Rev. Thomas Hooker, Gov. John Winthrop, Jr., Roger Sherman, Gov. Jonathan Trumbull, Noah Webster, Gen. Joseph Hawley, Civil War Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles, and Senator Orville Hitchcock Platt. See *History: The Connecticut State Capitol*, STATE CAPITOL PRESERVATION & RESTORATION COMM'N (accessed Mar. 10, 2023), <https://www.cga.ct.gov/cprc/history.asp>.

² Benjamin Madley, *Reexamining the American Genocide Debate: Meaning, Historiography, and New Methods*, 120, AM. HIST. REV. 98 (2015), <https://academic.oup.com/ahr/article/120/1/98/47185?login=false>.

recognized by our array of government-commissioned statues.³ Public art, like the statues watching over our capitol, sends messages about who the state values. The ACLU-CT supports efforts to diversify the statuary, monuments, and tympana of our state's capitol building with real, historical people that truly reflect our state. We support House Bill 6077, and encourage this Committee to do the same.

³ Jessica Goad, Matt Lee-Ashley & Farah Z. Ahmad, *Better Reflecting Our Country's Growing Diversity*, CTR. AM. PROGRESS (Feb. 19, 2014), <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/better-reflecting-our-countrys-growing-diversity/>.