



Legislative Testimony
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**Written Testimony Supporting
House Bill 7237, An Act Concerning A Disparity Study**

Senator Kushner, Representative Porter, and distinguished members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee:

My name is David McGuire, and I am executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut (ACLU-CT). I am submitting this testimony in support of House Bill 7237, An Act Concerning A Disparity Study.

As an organization that fights for equal opportunity for all, the ACLU-CT supports this bill, which would require the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities to conduct a disparity study regarding the state's set-aside program to determine whether it is achieving the goal of facilitating the participation in state contracts of small contractors and minority business enterprises.

The study provided for in this bill is a necessary step in evaluating and improving the state's current set-aside program, which was created to increase access to publicly-financed projects by groups of people who were historically disadvantaged. It would increase transparency around whether and how the program works, which would allow the public and policymakers to determine if changes are needed to ensure the program is meeting its goal. This evaluation is necessary to determine if the processes in place are, in fact, helping small and minority businesses. It would also highlight any ways in which the current process prohibits these businesses from fully participating in the contracting process, so that these barriers can be reduced.

Businesses owned by racial and ethnic minorities, women, and people with disabilities strengthen our state and offer employment for many of our residents. It is vital for the state to understand whether there is discrimination in the awarding of state contracts to them

before making changes to this program. The only way to do that is to study the current program. We strongly encourage the committee to support House Bill 7237.