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Rep. Joe Courtney (D-Conn.), Opening Remarks for Subcommittee on Workforce Protections Hearing on H.R. 4959, “EEOC Transparency and Accountability Act,” H.R. 5422, “Litigation Oversight Act of 2014,” and H.R. 5423, “Certainty in Enforcement Act of 2014.”

Good morning. Thank you Mr. Chairman. And thank you to the witnesses for being here.

This summer we celebrated the 50th anniversary of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, one of the most significant steps in the fight for equality in this nation’s history.

Title VII of this landmark law outlaws workplace discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. These provisions help ensure that American workers are judged on the work they do – not on who they are, where they are from, or what they look like.

Yet, even with all the progress we’ve made in the past 50 years, there is more work to be done as too many Americans suffer from discrimination by their employer even today. For example, just last year there were nearly 100,000 new charges of discrimination filed with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) -- including 1,019 Equal Pay Act charges and over 67,000 Title VII charges.

I was hopeful that when the subcommittee began to examine the work of the EEOC last year, we would look at ways to join together to strengthen our civil rights laws and build upon the critical improvements made through measures like the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments and the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act.

Instead, we are wasting valuable time with a set of misguided bills that impede the operations of the EEOC, and attempt to gut Title VII, turning back the clock on civil rights protections enacted more than 50 years ago. These bills would decimate the EEOC’s ability to safeguard American workers from discrimination, violate longstanding rules regarding attorney-client confidentiality, and do a great disservice to the nation.

We should instead be finding opportunities to work together to bolster this nation's civil rights laws, focusing on legislation that combats prejudice and works to ensure that no person faces discrimination in the classroom or workplace because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. The Fair Employment Protection Act, Paycheck Fairness Act and Employment Non Discrimination Act would all help to strengthen our civil rights laws and should be the focus of this hearing.

Thank you Mr. Chairman, and thanks again to our witnesses for your participation. I yield back the balance of my time.

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