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SUPPORT Raised Bill No. 5597 ***An Act Concerning Discrimination***

Testimony of Anne Stanback
Executive Director, Love Makes a Family

Judiciary Committee
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Senator McDonald, Representative Lawlor, and members of the Judiciary Committee: My name is Anne Stanback and I am the Executive Director of Love Makes a Family, a statewide coalition working for marriage equality for same-sex couples. I submit this testimony today in support of Raised Bill No. 5597, *An Act Concerning Discrimination*.

Love Makes a Family formed in 1999 to work to pass legislation that would allow second-parent adoption for same-sex couples. Once that legislation passed in 2000, our organization turned our attention to expanding Connecticut's marriage laws to include same-sex couples.

For six years, our organization's lobbying, community education and grassroots organizing efforts have focused exclusively on the issue of marriage equality. This session, however, our Board voted for the first time to add this new piece of legislation to our agenda. And the reason is simple: discrimination is wrong, whether it is discrimination based on sexual orientation or race or religion...*or gender identity or expression*.

And just as the discrimination faced by gay, lesbian and bisexual people was both real and legal before the so-called "Gay Rights Bill" passed in 1991, so too discrimination faced by transgender people is very real today. While it should no longer be legal because of a ruling by the state's Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities, codification within our anti-discrimination statutes will give additional protections and security to a group of citizens who continue to face intense bigotry from many quarters.

Transgender people live and work in our communities. They are not asking for special rights; they are only asking to be treated fairly. Connecticut has a long and proud history of protecting gay, lesbian and bisexual citizens. Let us do the same for those who are transgender.

As the largest gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender organization in the state, Love Makes a Family looks forward to engaging our membership in this important debate. Thank you.