



CONNECTICUT CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

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Judiciary Committee Testimony

HB5597: An Act Concerning Discrimination

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The Connecticut Catholic Conference is opposed to House Bill 5597, An Act Concerning Discrimination. First, I would like to make it clear that the Church does not in any way support violence or harassment against any individuals having gender identity issues. All individuals have a right to live a life free from threats of violence or persistent harassment. Current hate crime statues in Connecticut already provide these individuals such protections. However, this bill goes far beyond protecting individuals from violence and harassment. This proposed legislation would raise a cluster of various sexually related orientations, such as transsexualism and transvestism, to a protected class. Establishing gender identity as a protected class raises many issues.

If gender identity is established as a protected class, all persons within our state would be forced to accept, and support, the transsexual lifestyle. Many people of faith would be forced to violate their religious beliefs. Employers would have no discretion in the hiring of a transsexual person or removing that person from employment. If that employer found that person's behavior related to their gender identity to be negatively impacting their business, or disruptive to other employees, no action could be taken to alleviate the situation. Religious employers also would not be able to consider a person's behavior related to their gender identity, even if it violated their religious beliefs. Schools, public and private, would not be able to consider behavior related to their gender identity when hiring or evaluating teachers. Religious schools also would be forced to violate their religious tenants under this legislation, by affirmative action mandates.

Behaviors within our society, because they may be viewed as a source of discrimination, should not automatically be classified as a protected class. The background, social impact and causes of such behavior should be more closely examined. In the medical community gender identity is still classified as a mental health disorder in the American Psychiatric Association's "Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders" (DSM) and in the "International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems" (ICD). In fact, within the proposed legislation a questionable conflict exists surrounding this issue. Line 70- 73 classifies a "Mental Disability" as someone suffering from a mental disorder listed in the DSM. Gender Identity Disorder is part of that

publication. This legislation would then make a “mental disability”, as defined by state statute, into a protected rights class. Is this truly the direction this committee wants to undertake?

The Connecticut Catholic Conference urges rejection of this proposed legislation. The potential social impacts of making gender identity a protected class, along with the open mental health concerns surrounding this issue, would not make this piece of legislation good public policy.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Reynolds", written in a cursive style.

Deacon David Reynolds