

March 24, 2006

*Judiciary Committee
House Bill No. 5597
An Act Concerning Discrimination*

Greetings Honorable Senators and Representatives:

My name is Maria C. Hernandez and I am a student at the UCONN School of Social Work and am also employed as a Social Worker with the Department of Children and Families. I am here today to testify on Bill No. 5597, An Act Concerning Discrimination. I am in favor of this legislation and hope that you will support it.

Within my profession, I have worked with youth that have had gender identity issues due to being born hermaphrodites (ambiguous genitalia), who's parent's never decided for them what their gender should be. While fast approaching the age of majority, where they would once and for all decide on which gender they prefer to be, these adolescents presented with psychiatric issues such as depression with suicidal thoughts and ideation. These adolescents struggle with their sexual identity by no fault of their own. They not only struggle with it mentally and emotionally, but also through the discrimination that they encounter at school, at work places, at camps and among peers. Discrimination against gender identity is a very severe problem that affects children every day, not just trans-sexual adults who have decided to have major surgery to change their gender. These children were made fun of in school by their peers, they were made to feel as outcast as they did not know which locker room they should change in or which sports to try out for and were then referred to supposed professionals that did not know how to even begin to approach the problem due to the rarity of the cases. Once attempting to join the work force, after dropping out of school, they then encountered that the real world was no different then what they were trying to escape as they were denied job after job for not selecting the right gender on the application, or for what they thought was the discomfort that others may feel around them.

Nonetheless, no matter how rare the cases may seem, or how often we do or do not encounter a hermaphrodite, they are real people, with real feelings that do not deserve to be discriminated against simply because of their gender identity, or lack thereof.

The current policy on discrimination does not state that people should not be discriminated against based on their gender identity or expression and until those 4 words are added youth in crisis because of their gender identity will continue to suffer the repercussions of other's ignorance.

It is my recommendation that you vote in support of this Bill as it will greatly benefit many youth that have experienced discrimination due to gender identity issues.

I want to express my appreciation for being afforded the opportunity to testify and present my testimony to this committee and would be very happy to answer any questions.