



University of Connecticut

Rainbow Center
A Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual &
Transgender Educational
Resource Center

Honorable Co-Chairs and Members of the Committee:

I am grateful for the opportunity to submit testimony in unwavering support of Raised Bill No. 5597, An Act Concerning Discrimination, which would add the phrase “gender identity and expression” to all provisions in Connecticut law that prohibit sex discrimination. I would especially like to thank Representative Michael Lawlor and Senator Andrew MacDonald for sponsoring this important and much-needed legislation. I am the Director of the Rainbow Center, the University of Connecticut’s Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual & Transgender Educational Resource Center in addition to being a full-time third year law student at the University of Connecticut School of Law.

As the Director of the Rainbow Center, an important part of my work has been educating the University of Connecticut’s campuses about the pervasive discrimination faced by people whose gender identity or gender expression is not consistent with ideas about what it means to “be a man” or “be a woman.” Raised Bill No. 5597 will go far in remedying the discrimination itself and importantly, will help to educate the public about the lives and struggles of individuals who do not conform to traditional perspectives about gender.

In my work at the University, I regularly hear the stories of students, faculty, staff, and community members that do not fit within rigidly defined categories of male and female. Some folks identify as transgender, some do not. Some consider themselves to be gay or lesbian, but many do not. This bill will protect them all, whether in the context of employment, education, housing, or credit.

An Act Concerning Discrimination will clarify and update Connecticut’s non-discrimination laws to ensure that our laws clearly and uniformly protect all people regardless of their gender identity or gender expression. In November 2000, the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunity (CHRO) issued a declaratory ruling, clarifying that discrimination on account of sex includes transgender people. Raised Bill No. 5597 simply codifies this decision. Importantly, by adding the “gender identity and expression” language to our discrimination laws, the state simultaneously gives notice to and protects employers and others, by making it clear that discrimination on account of gender identity or expression is illegal in Connecticut. Rather than assume that businesses, organizations, and individuals will be familiar with CHRO rulings, this bill put the “law of the land” where people expect to find it: in our laws.

An Equal Opportunity Employer

2110 Hillside Road Unit 3096
Storrs, Connecticut 06269-3096

Telephone: (860) 486-5821

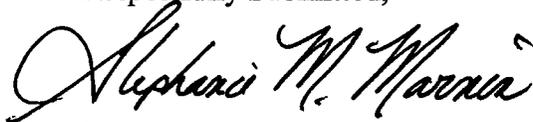
Facsimile: (860) 486-6674

e-mail: mbwdir@uconnvm.uconn.edu

web: <http://www.rainbowcenter.uconn.edu>

Including gender identity and gender expression in anti-discrimination laws does not reflect an “activist” legislature. Indeed, similar laws have been in existence since as early as 1975 when Minneapolis, MN passed its law protecting gender identity and expression. The states of Minnesota, Rhode Island, New Mexico, California, Illinois, Maine, Washington and the District of Columbia already have laws prohibiting discrimination on the basis of gender identity or expression. Shouldn't the citizens of Connecticut have similar protections?

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Stephanie M. Marnin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'S'.

Stephanie M. Marnin, Director