

# OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

165 CHURCH STREET • NEW HAVEN • CONNECTICUT 06510



JOHN DESTEFANO, JR.  
Mayor



*The vision of New Haven's children  
is our city's greatest resource\**

## TESTIMONY OF JOHN DESTEFANO, JR. BEFORE THE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE IN SUPPORT OF RAISED BILL NO. 1044, AN ACT CONCERNING DISCRIMINATION

I strongly support Raised Bill 1044 *An Act Concerning Discrimination*, which would add "gender identity or expression" to Connecticut's non-discrimination laws.

Discrimination against people because of their gender identity or expression takes many forms. Some have been fired. Others remain unemployed or underemployed as a result of discrimination, hostility and misunderstanding about their gender identity or expression. Because of prejudices about how "real men" or "real women" should look or act, transgender and non-transgender people are harassed in the workplace and treated unfairly in public accommodations, housing, schools, and credit transactions.

Anti-discrimination laws help to define our society by defining the traits that cannot be considered when making decisions about, or simply interacting with, people. More importantly, they provide the way for those laws to be both understood and enforced.

Under our laws, the ability to work, find housing, eat in a restaurant, or shop in a store does not depend on one's race, creed, color, national origin or ancestry, sex, and sexual orientation. Those factors are important to an individual's self-identity, but it is wrong to base decisions about someone else's life on them.

One's ability to find a job should not depend on whether one's gender identity or expression matches – or fails to match – someone else's stereotypes or expectations. Regardless of whether someone is a man or a woman, the fact that someone is perceived as masculine, feminine, or whose gender identity or expression fits neither a masculine or feminine "mold" does not change what they have to contribute to society. This law will ensure that we do not lose out on their gifts, talents and abilities because of biases.

Current protections are not explicit enough. The law must be clear to everyone, not just to lawyers. Passing this bill will say, clearly and plainly, that it is wrong to prevent someone from working, renting an apartment, riding a bus, eating in a restaurant, or participating in some other important way because of gender identity or expression. Making places safer for more people will increase productivity and safety for employees, consumers, residents, and students.

This law will help ensure that the valuable contributions that people have to offer do not get locked out by discrimination, hostility, discomfort and misunderstanding. Please pass this bill.



phone 203.946.8200 fax 203.946.7683

*\*This creative impression is the work of Jennifer Montalvo, a student at Nathan Hale School.*