

My name is Julie Alexandrin, and I am a resident of Storrs, CT and a professor of special education and diversity education at Saint Joseph College. I am also the president of the Connecticut Chapter of the National Association for Multicultural Education. My doctorate is in Educational Psychology. I strongly support and urge the passage of SB 1044, An Act Concerning Discrimination.

As I person with a hidden learning disability, I know what it is like to hide something from others and how this interferes with my ability to fully participate in society and my work. I have to watch what I say to others and sometimes stand back from performing to my full ability, as I am afraid my disability may show and I will be judged based on that fact only. As a society, with our strong prejudices and stereotypes, we judge people based on one aspect of who they are, instead of the whole person. We especially hold tight to stereotypes and biases that we fear, which is usually associated with people who differ from what is seen as mainstream society.

I have watched many students and colleagues hide different aspects of who they are because of societal pressure and seen first-hand how this has negatively affected their life and the people they have come into contact with. The main reason that it has negatively affected others is that these people can not fully be who they are, as they had to worry about what they say to others, and hide aspects of themselves for fear of being shunned or fired from where they worked. How can an one reach their full potential when they are hiding something, because society tells them that the aspect of them is not good?

Hence comes the question; Why does society feel so negative about non-gender conforming and transgender people? The aspect of being non-gender conforming or transgender does not harm others when it is expressed fully, as people being male or female does not hurt others. Instead, the negative affects only occur when people are not allowed to fully express their true gender.

Our strict societal expectations of what is male and female does not only hurt non-gender conforming and transgender people, but all of society. In my opinion, the best example of this is what society expects little girls and boys to play with. It is looked down upon when young boys play in a kitchen area at their preschools and daycares, but yet the best chefs in the world are male. Girls are told from a very young age that they are not good at science and mathematics, and as a result, they do not achieve in these areas. Hence, we lose future scientists and mathematicians through our prejudicial society. How does it hurt others when boys are allowed to play in a kitchen and girls encouraged to succeed in science and math? These restrictions do not make our country stronger, but instead create missed opportunities.

I also personally see how society's strict expectations of what is male and female has hurt my 11 year old daughter. She identifies as female, and is very masculine in her dress. She has grown up being called a boy, and hates it when people assume she is male only based on her dress and hair cut. She is timid in new situations, but yet has flourished in situations where she is not judged based on societal expectations of what is male and female. I worry as she gets older and starts looking for jobs, who will judge her and how will she be judged by others based on the way she dresses and presents herself. These aspects will not affect how well she does a job, or if she is qualified for a job, but yet these outward aspects will be held to a higher standard than her abilities. This is sad not only for my daughter, but again for society, as we lose valuable workers

and expertise based on aspects of people that have nothing to do with their ability to perform the tasks of the job or interact with others.

As we have seen in the past decades, gender has nothing to do with job performance and success. More and more women are becoming top CEOs, and there are some wonderful teachers and nurses who are male. So why do we need to keep judging people based on their gender identity or expression? In so doing, we only limit all people in how they express their gender, which limits us as a society in reaching our full potential.

For all of these reasons, I strongly support and urge the passage of SB 1044, An Act Concerning Discrimination.