

# OUTTEN & GOLDEN<sup>LLP</sup>

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February 22, 2007

Honorable Co-Chairs and Members of the Committee:

I am grateful for the opportunity to submit testimony in unwavering support of Raised Bill No. 1044, 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 McDonald for sponsoring this important and much-needed legislation. I am an attorney with Outten & Golden LLP, in the firm’s Stamford office and a member of the firm’s Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Employment Rights Practice Group. We are the only employment firm in the country with an LGBT Practice Group. Prior to joining Outten & Golden, I was the Director of the Rainbow Center, the University of Connecticut’s Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual & Transgender Educational Resource.

An important part of my work over the past several years has been educating residents of Connecticut about the pervasive discrimination faced by people whose gender identity or gender expression is not consistent with conventional ideas about what it means to “be a man” or “be a woman.” An Act Concerning Discrimination is not only an important step towards remedying discrimination, it will educate the public about the lives and struggles of individuals who do not conform to traditional notions about gender and clearly communicate to the residents of the State of Connecticut that this discrimination is wrong.

In my work, I regularly hear the stories of individuals who 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. 1044 codifies this decision and extends its reach beyond the CHRO's areas of responsibility. 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.

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 Jersey, New Mexico, California, Illinois, Maine, Washington, Hawai'i, 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 cursive script that reads "Stephanie M. Marnin". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Stephanie M. Marnin, Esq.