

Planned Parenthood of Connecticut
345 Whitney Avenue, New Haven, CT 06511
Testimony to the Judiciary Committee in support of
SB 1044, An Act Concerning Discrimination.
February 23, 2007

Senator McDonald, Representative Lawlor and members of the committee, my name is TR Richardson, and I am a Trainer/Community Educator for Planned Parenthood of CT. Planned Parenthood of CT serves about 65,000 patients yearly for reproductive and sexual health services. As health care providers we have taken appropriate steps to promote the health of our lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LBGT) patients by looking at our policies, practices and staff training to improve access to quality health care for all individuals who come to our health centers. Our agency supports SB 1044, *An Act Concerning Discrimination*.

Transgender people are underserved in our health care system, which is only one form of the discrimination they face in our society. Transgender, transsexual and gender non-conforming people face discrimination in health care for a number of reasons including lack of knowledge of their specific health needs, lack of qualified and trained medical providers and lack of health insurance and/or coverage for specific health needs.

As a trainer for Planned Parenthood of CT, I am responsible for preparing staff with the knowledge and skills to offer a safe, high quality, and welcoming health care environment. Trainings I provide include "LGBT Health: With an Emphasis on Trans Issues" and "How to be a Trans Ally." These trainings prepare staff to address the health needs of patients without creating barriers related to their sexual orientation or sexual behavior or gender identity/expression. We are committed to making necessary changes in our clinical practices to ensure a non-discriminatory environment. For example, we are making changes on health forms and examining ways to make our health centers more welcoming and open to transgender patients, such as gender neutral restrooms.

In addition, Planned Parenthood of CT has a non-discrimination hiring policy which includes gender identity/expression. In short, our work has led us to an appreciation of the barriers transgender individuals face every day...barriers that can include bias and even violence. We realize that not everyone has yet come to an appreciation of these concerns, which is why it is so vital that transgender people have places where they *can* feel safe and welcome, along with allies who can meet their needs with understanding, not judgment.

We urge you to support SB 1044, to protect the rights of all people and to continue to make Connecticut the haven it has traditionally been for civil rights and liberties, including gender identity and expression among its protections. Thank you.