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To: Members of the Judiciary Committee

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Senator MacDonald, Representative Lawler and Members of the Judiciary Committee, I am honored to have the opportunity to speak in support of SB 1044 *AN ACT CONCERNING DISCRIMINATION*.

I am the director of True Colors, Inc. a state-wide non-profit agency that works to create a world where youth, adults and families of all sexual orientations and gender identities are valued and affirmed. We challenge all forms of oppression through education, training, advocacy, youth leadership development, mentoring and direct services to youth and those responsible for their well-being.

Based on my experience with transgender and gender variant youth, I believe SB 1044 is critical to the current as well as future health and well-being of my constituents.

I'd like to tell you about three youth we are working with right now. J* is female bodied, but male identified. He has always worn male clothing, usually overlarge to better camouflage the breasts he can't afford to surgically alter to better match his gender identity. His hair is shaved close to his head and he is very well groomed. In spite of his enthusiasm, excellent written and verbal skills, he has never been called back for a second job interview. He wonders, as do I, what role his gender expression plays in the decisions his potential employers have made. SB 1044 offers employers the opportunity to help hire people based on their competence, not their clothes -- their job skills rather than the extent that their gender matches their genitals.

S* is 17. For most of her life, there has been no place she could truly call 'home' and no school that has really been safe. Because SB 1044 *AN ACT CONCERNING DISCRIMINATION* includes school environments, future children may not have to work so hard to receive a safe and equitable education. Born male, but living full time as female, S* began in a

school system which initially was quite hostile. She dealt with school administrators who taunted her and students who threatened her. Ultimately, the school stepped up to its responsibilities – the Administrator was disciplined, the school support team, her mentor (and True Colors) came to her defense – The school even changed the single stall bathrooms to gender neutral facilities that any child, including S*, could use. I wish the story had a happier ending though. S* was in that particular school because she was in foster care. She was removed from her biological family due of abuse and neglect, then was targeted again in the foster home into which she was placed. Although, DCF is already the only State Agency to currently include gender identity and expression in their non-discrimination language, the passage of SB 1044 will give them greater leverage to enforce it with providers of services to our children in care. S*'s foster mother refused to let her wear anything but “boy’s” clothes or to identify as female while in her home. S* asked True Colors not to intervene because her sibling was also in that home and she was afraid she would lose contact with the only family she felt she had left. Eventually, the situation in the foster home became so intolerable that S* taped an incident of abuse, shared it with the school social worker and the children were removed. The foster home was ultimately closed due to the level of verbal abuse this ‘parent’ perpetrated on this child. Sadly, that move resulted in the loss of the only supportive school environment S* had known – and she hasn’t been back to school since.

N* is my third example. He is a 17 year old ward of the state currently living in foster care in CT. He came into the system as a 9 year old girl for abuse and neglect issues not relevant to his subsequent gender identity as a male, although gender has been a major and on-going factor for him in terms of placement, correct pronoun usage, etc. If SB 1044 had been in place, DCF could have included non-discrimination in their contract language for providers. That language (and its enforcement) might have saved N* a great deal of pain and anguish in several of his placements. One director of a crises intervention program, for example, told me, and I quote (though the italics are mine), “We can affirm *her* male gender identity, while using *her* female name.” Odd, don’t you think, that this same director wondered about the causes of N*’s ‘anger problems?’

I appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony in favor of the passage of SB 1044 and would be delighted to talk with you further at your convenience. Thank you for your time and attention.