

Ethan F.
Testimony to the Judiciary Committee in support of
HB 5723: An Act Concerning Discrimination.
March 19, 2008

My name is Ethan F. and I strongly support HB 5723, *An Act Concerning Discrimination*. I am female bodied and male identified. I began my transition from female to male when I was sixteen years old. I am a senior within the Connecticut State University school system. Currently, housing within the Connecticut State University system does not meet the needs of transgender students. In order to live on campus, you must be assigned to live with people of your biological sex. I lived on campus during my first year. Although I identified as male, I was assigned to reside in a female straight-line dormitory. This was certainly concerning to me at the time, because I was continuously worried about my safety. People often times do not question that biological sex is different from gender, so I lived in fear that if anyone was not in favor of me and my transition, or found out that someone who was challenging gender norms was living in the same quarters as them, I would suffer the consequences (either emotionally or physically).

Luckily, I have never been harmed physically, and the emotional abuse has not been nearly as bad as it could have been. However, the fear alone of the possibility of being harmed was and is still detrimental enough to my well-being. Living in constant fear of your safety is not the way anyone should ever have to live their life.

I am fortunate enough to be employed by Planned Parenthood of Connecticut, which includes the phrase gender identity or expression in its inclusive non-discrimination policy. Many transgender and gender non-conforming individuals are not able to work and provide for themselves and their families due to the discrimination that they face in the workplace. Some are simply never even considered for a position (despite their qualifications), are fired when their gender status is discovered, or continue to work in environments that may be intolerable, disrespectful, and unsafe. It is crucial that transgender and gender non-conforming individuals have places where they are safe and welcome. When we do not have control over our safety, we lose control over our lives.

Businesses all across the nation have added the phrase "gender identity or expression" to their hiring policies, including about one third of Fortune 500 companies. Colleges and Universities nationwide have also noted the importance of this addition to their anti-discrimination policies, including Yale University and Connecticut College. If passed, Connecticut would be joining thirteen states and a (rapidly growing) number of nationally recognized organizations in protecting all individuals from discrimination, regardless of gender identity or expression.

Transgender and gender non-conforming individuals are confronted with barriers everyday. These obstacles very often include an extensive amount of prejudice and can even escalate to become an issue of personal safety. No individual should be denied from accessing any services within the realms of education, healthcare, public accommodations, housing and/or employment because of the biases of others. The state of Connecticut already realizes the importance of fair treatment for many individuals. Please extend this right to protect the constituents of Connecticut by expanding the anti-discrimination law to include the phrase "gender identity or expression". Thank you.