

An Act Concerning Discrimination
HB 5723

March 19, 2008

Dear Members of the Judiciary Committee,

Thank you for this opportunity to voice my support for HB 5723, An Act Concerning Discrimination. My name is Dalia Panke, and this is the third year that I have offered written testimony in support of bills similar to HB 5723.

I know that throughout the day and through written testimony that you will learn of the need to offer protections to transgender people who have experienced discriminatory practices from employers and service providers. I am writing to echo those concerns of my transgender brothers and sisters and to offer a summary of my own experiences as a transgender person.

In August, 2007 I officially transitioned from David to Dalia and from expressing my gender as a man to a woman. As I prepared for this switch I fully educated myself on the state of the law in Connecticut regarding transgender persons and studied my employer's anti-discrimination policies. My employer, a branch the State of Connecticut had anti-discrimination policies that strictly followed the present statutory scheme. The human resource policies did not reflect the CHRO declaratory ruling on the issue gender. They were honestly unaware of it's existence. I, the employee seeking the protection of my human resources unit, was placed in the position of educating those to whom I sought guidance. Had the statutes definitively included gender expression in it's definition, then the protections would have been easier to find and easier to acknowledge. Today, eight months later, the human resources policy continues to be void of references to gender expression because it is not included in the statute. The passage of HB 5723 will assist both the transgender community and the employer community by offering clear and unequivocal law regarding the treatment of transgender persons.

In closing, I believe my eleven year old son best summed it up while speaking with Congressman Joe Courtney last summer. He said to Rep. Courtney, "we need you to help make sure that my dad doesn't lose her job just because she's man who's really a woman inside."

On behalf of my family, my transgender community and the community at large, I urge you pass HB 5723 to help protect and educate the citizens of Connecticut, and so that you can affirmatively tell my son that you will help ensure that our State treats all persons equally.

Dalia Panke
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