

Hello everyone; committee members, legislators, and my peers alike. Thank you for taking the time to hear my most honest and deepest beliefs regarding proposed Bill HB-5723. My name is Sara Fogarty and I am a senior at Guilford High School. I am not a new face to discrimination; it has been a heavy influence in my daily life since my birth when cerebral palsy plagued my life. Though growing up with a minor disability was a tremendous struggle to cope with and overcome, cerebral palsy has not been the most prominent blockade on my road to success. As an individual caught in between binary gender system, I received more abuse, slander and hatred from others on the basis of how I express myself than I did solely based on my disability.

It is unfortunate that our communities and school districts have become so fearful and intimidated by those who believe in social censorship that they themselves deny a valuable learning experience. Specifically, I can recall many times in which my school has failed to act responsibly by taking action against discriminatory issues. To site one occasion in particular, earlier this passed fall, a teacher from my school stopped me in the hallway. He decided to make a comment about my wearing of "boy's" jeans. When I respectfully went about my business and ignored him, his words became ugly; he called me a "disgrace to my genetic gender" and further harassed me about my physical appearance. When I reported this, my administrator suggested a meeting with the teacher, myself, and the assistant principle. The teacher was treated as the victim in that meeting and was excused after only five minutes. After the teacher left, the administration told me there was nothing they could do.

My school caused me at that moment to lose faith in their ability to prevent and change the amount of discrimination that students face in their building. It is my hope that you will understand where ambiguity in the law has caused miscommunication, hurtful actions, and unnecessary suffering. I am asking you as a student who knows and understands the pain of discrimination, and simply wants to see justice be served and equality's meaning to hold true for not some, but all Connecticut residents. Thank you.

I hope it works. Make any adjustments you need to! I talked to Erik today; he said he'd do it, but I don't know if he actually will have the time.

Sara Fogarty