

### **HB 5723**

Good Afternoon and thank you Chairmen McDonald and Lawlor, and members of the committee. My name is Brianna Johnston, I live in Bloomfield and I am a student at the Hartford Seminary.

It is an honor to speak before the committee and I am here to voice my support for House Bill 5723: An Act Concerning Discrimination. I believe this bill is absolutely necessary to continue the trend to change the longstanding attitudes in this state and this country that it is okay to discriminate and to abridge the rights of those who are a minority and who don't have a strong voice. It's wrong, it's offensive and as someone who hopes someday to be ordained, it is painfully unchristian.

It's painful for me to see friends lose their jobs when they come out. Personally, I gave up on my profession as an actuary because I found interviews too demeaning and treated as if I was unqualified, even though I had managed the actuarial departments of two companies; in fact, in my last job I had managed the entire company. Bless every woman who must deal with male privilege on a daily basis. I've seen it from both sides, male privilege is real, discriminatory and gender privilege merely exacerbates the problem.

One reason I'm here is to tell the committee that I was recently turned down for health insurance and I am now uninsured. My health is excellent. It's illegal discrimination. While this bill won't apply to my particular issue, I believe it will change attitudes.

My second comment I'm hoping will also change attitudes. Churches generally have not been kind to the transgender or to those who express their gender according to their nature. However, in Matthew 19 in the Bible, Jesus speaks of people who "are eunuchs who have been so from birth....." Most scholars gloss over the specifics of this profound statement. Here Jesus speaks of babies born as eunuchs, born without genitalia, children who are different from their siblings. Eunuch is not an adequate descriptor because we could not know whether the baby is a boy or girl. Today we know gender is a deeply held, psychological trait, separate from our biological gender. And like these children, Jesus attests that even in God's plan, things don't always match. Jesus shows kindness and talks of eunuchs living for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. They too are part of his plan. Matthew finishes the chapter with the familiar line, "But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first. My hope is that the time is now for citizens to show the same kindness. Hopefully this bill will change attitudes, enforce basic human rights and uphold human dignity. Thank you.