

Thank you for listening to my testimony. My name is Michelle Hansen and I live in Waterbury. Among other things I am an Episcopal Priest. I used to earn my living in the computer industry working for a medium size computer repair and training company in Plantsville, Connecticut. I had worked for this company for almost 18 years and was their senior technical trainer. I had a spouse and a family.

A week after notifying my employer of my plans to transition from male to female I was released. I was given a three page lawyer prepared letter. The letter did not explain the reasons why I was laid off but what weren't the reasons. In addition I was offered a small severance if I would agree not to sue them. It is clear that they were thinly veiling their true reasons for letting me go. I was released before I began my public transition. I was released when they learned I was transsexual.

I have not worked a full time job since that day. When I was released I lost my short and long term disability insurance. Two months later I was diagnosed with cancer. I have been treated and I am now on disability. I have two Master's degrees from Yale and I have a long list of certifications in the computer industry, but still have no job.

I believe that House Bill 5723 to protect the rights of all people no matter what their gender identity or expression is essential. There is almost nothing as fundamental as the ability to work. It is necessary to provide food and housing for one's self and one's family. It is also important to a person's individual sense of self worth. Take away a person's right to work and you force that person into desperation and despair.

Transgender individuals are very much like everyone else in most ways. The way they are different is that their birth gender is different from their mental gender. Being transgender is from birth and lasts until death and is not a matter of choice. As a transgender person I struggled for years knowing that my birth body was wrong for my felt gender. There is no cure for being transgender. The only successful treatment is to live in the gender that the brain accepts.

I can tell you all that no transgender person wants to be humiliated, to be taunted or shamed. No transgender person wants to be beaten, punished or fired. We all want to feel self worth and to support ourselves and have warm housing. Transgender individuals are a minority and largely misunderstood. We need legal protection. We need the protection of HB 5723.

I hope that there will be no further stories like mine after the passage of HB 5723.

Thank you,

The Rev. Michelle Hansen, S.T.M, M.Div., BA