

Planned Parenthood of Connecticut
345 Whitney Avenue, New Haven, CT 06511
Testimony to the Judiciary Committee in support of
HB 5723, An Act Concerning Discrimination.
March 19, 2008

Senator McDonald, Representative Lawlor and members of the committee, my name is Gretchen Raffa, and I am the Community Organizer for Planned Parenthood of CT. Planned Parenthood of CT supports HB 5723, *An Act Concerning Discrimination*. Our agency serves about 65,000 patients yearly for reproductive and sexual health services. As health care providers we have taken appropriate steps to promote the health of our lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LBGT) patients by looking at our policies, clinical practices and staff training to improve access to quality health care for all individuals who come to our health centers.

What we know is transgender people are underserved in our health care system, which is only one form of the discrimination they face in our society. Transgender, transsexual and gender non-conforming people face discrimination in health care for a number of reasons including lack of knowledge of their specific health needs, lack of qualified and trained medical providers and lack of health insurance and/or coverage for specific health needs.

Because of the urgent need for health care providers who can address the specific needs of the transgender community we are committed to taking necessary steps to ensure a non-discriminatory environment. In our mission to provide quality and sensitive health care we are making changes on health forms and examining ways to make our health centers more welcoming and open to transgender patients. In the past year we have made it an agency wide policy to have gender neutral/private restrooms in our health centers and administrative office. To address the specific health needs of patients who identify as transgender and are in the process of transitioning we will be offering hormone replacement therapy in one of our health centers in the upcoming year.

In addition, Planned Parenthood of CT has a non-discrimination hiring policy which includes gender identity/expression. We realize that not everyone has yet come to an appreciation of these concerns, which is why it is so vital that transgender people have places where they *can* feel safe and welcome, along with allies who can meet their needs with understanding, not judgment.

As Community Organizer I have heard many personal stories from individuals who identify as transgender and gender non-conforming people who have shared with me the barriers they have faced not only in receiving appropriate and sensitive health care but also other biases they face in their everyday lives, including violence and hate. We urge you to support HB 5723, to protect the basic human rights of all people in Connecticut by including gender identity and expression among the protections Connecticut guarantees its citizens. Thank you.