



## AN ACT CONCERNING DISCRIMINATION HB 6452

Honorable Chairman, Senators, and Representatives, my name is David McGuire. I am a staff attorney at the American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut and I urge you to vote in favor of House Bill 6452, AN ACT CONCERNING DISCRIMINATION.

Transgender people often face pervasive discrimination in virtually every aspect of life. Transgender people are frequently discriminated against in the workplace, denied healthcare and housing, and face harassment at school. People who do not perfectly fit into conventional ideas of male or female gender roles are often victimized when engaging in activities most people take for granted, such as checking into a hotel, eating at a restaurant, or using public transportation.

Discrimination based on gender identity or expression is a serious and real problem in Connecticut. One of my duties at the ACLU-CT is responding to phone calls and letters from the public. I receive calls and letters from transgender people and their families regarding discrimination.

Despite these serious issues, Connecticut has no explicit law protecting transgender people from discrimination in employment, education, housing, and public accommodations. In 2004, the Connecticut legislature demonstrated its understanding of the challenges faced by transgender people when it passed a transgender-inclusive hate crime law. In 2000, the Connecticut Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities (CHRO) issued a declaratory ruling indicating that transgender people are protected under existing Connecticut sex discrimination laws.

It is fair to say that most people in Connecticut are not familiar with CHRO declaratory rulings, let alone the significant ruling I just referenced. Adding the phrase "gender identity or expression" to current non-discrimination laws will codify statutory protection for transgender people. Another important reason to formalize protection for transgender people is to educate the people of Connecticut that it is unlawful to discriminate against people due to their gender identity or expression.

It is important to note that a growing number of states, cities, and towns prohibit discrimination against transgender people. Currently, thirteen states (California, Colorado, Hawaii, Illinois, Iowa, Maine, Minnesota, New Jersey, New Mexico, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont and Washington) and Washington, DC have statewide prohibitions on gender identity discrimination. Additionally, governors of at least two states (Maryland and Michigan) and have banned discrimination against transgender state employees through executive orders.

Please vote in favor of this important act that adds gender identity as a protected characteristic to Connecticut non-discrimination law. This action will ensure a more fair and just Connecticut.