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Testimony before the Judiciary Committee
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In favor of HB 6452

Thank you Co-Chairpersons McDonald and Lawlor and members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Brianna Johnston. I am a resident of Bloomfield, CT, and I am currently studying at Hartford Seminary to become an ordained minister. I appreciate this time to testify in favor of House Bill 6452, An Act Concerning Discrimination. My testimony regards my personal experience with discrimination.

Seven years ago this week... in tears I confided to my wife my gender circumstances and the prison of pain that had sapped me daily for some forty years. With love and support from my family, I successfully transitioned from male to female gender. Like a gift from God, the first day of transition was the day my prison of pain vanished and never returned.

Without this bill that protects the core human traits of gender identity and gender expression, we as a state implicitly support discrimination, tread on human dignity, and become co-conspirators in causing harm to the lives of real people in Connecticut.

Prior to my transition, I was blessed with a 28- year career as an actuary. My last position was president of a new insurance operation. After transitioning in 2004 and some time away from work to study and volunteer, my first job prospect was a promising phone interview with a prospective boss, who was excited to have me meet several people at their offices. However,

when I arrived the day of the interview, his tone changed. I was left waiting in reception for 45 minutes, with hardly an explanation or apology. When the interview finally began, he was now very vague, speaking only generalities. After only ten or fifteen minutes, he said, “This isn’t going to work” and bluntly asked, “Who is going to listen to you?” His message stung me that, because I was a transgender person, I would not be fairly considered for the job—one that I was extremely qualified for.

I hope you can understand the depth of my concerns—that there are far too many transgender people in Connecticut who are unemployed or underemployed, not because of our qualifications or experience, but simply because of our gender identity and expression. A friend of mine was fired from her position as a university professor when she announced her plan to transition; another friend is treated coldly at work and has no possibility of job promotion; and several other transgender friends scrupulously protect their privacy for fear of losing their jobs.

The proposed legislation would also help ensure the dignity and safety of transgender people in Connecticut, by clearly stating that discrimination against transgender people will not be tolerated. When I legally changed my name, I also changed my last name to protect my family from harassment.

I urge the Committee to support this bill and urge the legislature to pass it, to protect our transgender and gender nonconforming citizens, and to take a stand against discrimination. Thank you.