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Greenwich, CT

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Hartford, CT

Meriden-Wallingford Chrysalis
Meriden, CT

New Horizons
Middletown, CT

Prudence Crandall Center
New Britain, CT

Domestic Violence Services
New Haven, CT

Women's Center of SE CT
New London, CT

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Norwalk, CT

Women's Support Services
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Stamford, CT

Susan B. Anthony Project
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Safe Haven
Waterbury, CT

United Services, Inc.
Domestic Violence Programs
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To: Members of the Judiciary Committee

From: Robin Kraemer

Date: March 19, 2009

Re: HB 6452, AN ACT CONCERNING DISCRIMINATION

Good afternoon Senator McDonald, Representative Lawlor and members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Robin Kraemer and I am an MSW student who is currently placed at the Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence (CCADV). I am also a member of Working Against Violence Everywhere (W.A.V.E), a coalition dedicated to promoting education, advocacy, policies and services that respect the diverse needs of all domestic violence and sexual assault victims and survivors. Thank you for accepting my testimony regarding HB 6452: An Act Concerning Discrimination.

I am writing to urge you to support equality of protection under the law for all Connecticut citizens by adding "gender identity and expression" to the current anti-discrimination law in our state. It is time for the State of Connecticut to formally recognize the rights of transgender individuals in employment, housing, credit, and all public places and settings. These protections are necessary to ensure the safety of transgender citizens.

While there are still no specific protections for transgender individuals in Connecticut, protecting the rights of these citizens is not unprecedented. Currently, 13 states and over 100 cities and towns already have laws similar to the one proposed in HB 6452. In Connecticut, many companies have already voluntarily expanded their company policies to protect the rights of transgender individuals from discrimination in the workplace, including Aetna, American Airlines, AT&T, Best Buy, and Xerox, to name only a few.

Without these protections, transgender individuals face not only individual discrimination, but discrimination within the system. Transgender individuals face an exceptionally high rate of unemployment, almost 8 times that of similar non-transgender individuals, and a poverty rate of almost 5 times higher. In the educational system, transgender students in schools are subjected to harassment by students and administrators alike, resulting in diminished performance, substance abuse, and even dropping out of school. Due to intolerance, transgender individuals are also more likely to experience violence. These circumstances for unprotected transgender individuals deny them the full opportunity to work and live safely and productively.

As a social worker and a concerned citizen of Connecticut, I feel it is crucial to work towards equality and safety of all the people in our state. As citizens of Connecticut, transgender individuals have a right to protection, safety, and equal opportunity. I urge you to support HB 6452: An Act Concerning Discrimination to ensure the equality of protection under the law for all Connecticut citizens by adding "gender identity and expression" to the current anti-discrimination law in our state. Thank you.