

To: Judicial Committee

March 19, 2009

From: Charlle Ortiz

RE: Statement in support of HB6452 – An Act Concerning Discrimination

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My name is Charlie Ortiz and I live at 760 Prospect Avenue in Hartford. I am a registered voter and I am here to request your support for the HB 6452. As a Latino, I have witnessed the extreme discrimination against homosexuals and the transgender populations both within my community and outside of it. As a Latino and a gay male, it took years to have the courage to face that discrimination and gain the strength to protect myself and speak out. Staying silent is no longer an option, so I am here to share with you some of the reasons why I feel that adoption of this bill is important.

First, I believe that passage of this bill is simply the right thing to do. Discrimination in all of its ugly forms must end. The state has an obligation to protect all: being in the minority, transgender persons have endured the longest period of discrimination, and will continue to suffer the cruelest and most rampant form of discrimination if you, my esteemed legislators, do not act.

I have trust in this great State of Connecticut. I believe that this is a state that judges and values its citizens based on their abilities and competencies and not on outward appearances. I believe that this is a state that will protect those who have a long history of being discriminated against, and not protect those whom are offended by transgender folks, in total disregard for their rights as human beings.

I believe that this act is consistent with our state and federal constitutional protections of freedom of speech, and our international declarations of human rights and the dignity, and worth of all individuals. Yesterday, on March 18, 2009, the Obama Administration signed onto the United Nations Declaration calling for a cessation of discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity expression. Today I ask you, the Connecticut General Legislature to do the same. We should follow the growing number of states, cities, Colleges and Universities who have added such anti-discrimination statutes for the protection of all their citizens.

But there is a more personal reason why I would like protection extended. You see, growing up I was forced to witness the severe physical, sexual, and emotional abuse suffered by an older brother, Robert, who was effeminate and transgender. As a small child, he was very effeminate, and my father often beat him for no reason other than his apparent effeminate qualities. It seemed all people victimized him at all places. It was acceptable abuse, and after all, there was no law against it. My brother did his best to conform without success and later just retreated trying not to be noticed by anyone. He sought refuge in schools, churches, yet everywhere he sought refuge he was rejected and ostracized. As the years passed, and along the way Robert became a quiet withdrawn person. His spirit was crushed and as soon as he turned 18 he left home, and moved thousands of miles away where no one knew him. He died alone and far away, so that we would not be offended by his presence. I want you to think of all the Roberts out there who need your help, so that their humanity is not stolen from them.

Thank you.