

## **2009 Testimony to the Judicial Committee An Act Concerning Discrimination HB6452**

Honorable chairs, senators and representatives, my name is Diana Lombardi and I live in Berlin. I would like to urge you to vote in favor of HB6452 An Act Concerning Discrimination.

Ten years ago, I come out as transgender and attended a support group.

Ten years ago, I never knew anyone that committed suicide nor attempted to commit suicide.

Ten years ago, I never knew anyone who was homeless and begging for a place to stay.

Ten years ago, I never knew anyone who worked the streets.

Ten years ago, I never knew anyone with AIDS.

Ten years ago, I never knew anyone who was fired from work because of who they are.

Ten years ago, I never knew anyone who was thrown out of a store because of who they are.

These are life lessons that I never thought that I would learn. In the support group, I met people who were fired from their jobs and ended up on state assistance. I met people who were harassed when they went to the grocery store. I met people who just wanted to live their lives and support their families. We need to stop this discrimination, and this bill will help to end these injustices.

I do not know if you have seen the movie "Milk" but what struck me while watching the movie, was the argument that the opposition made back in 1978 for Proposition 6, to ban "homosexual teachers from teaching." It was the same argument made before this Judiciary Committee in 1991 when the gay rights bill was passed. And, it is the same argument that they are making now... "The students will not understand." Their fears were groundless then and their fears are groundless now.

Thirteen states have passed a gender identity non-discrimination law; gender inclusive non-discrimination laws protect 39% of the U.S. population

and teachers transitioning have not been a problem in any of those states. These are not new laws, they have been around for decades. The first city to pass a gender Non-Discrimination ordinance was Minneapolis, in 1975. Rhode Island passed their law eight years ago, Maine passed their gender identity law four years ago and Vermont passed their law two years ago. None of these states or municipalities report issues in the implementation of the law.

I have heard it argued that parents do not want their children to know about transsexuals because the parents are uncomfortable talking about lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgender people. I am uncomfortable about many things that people do, but I do not go around trying to band their actions and treat them as second-class citizens. When I was a child, there were many things that my parents taught me, and one thing that they taught me was not to treat people who are different any differently than we treat anyone else. If we prohibit teachers from transitioning, we are teaching children that it is OK to treat people who are different differently. That is a wrong message to send to our children. Instead, we should teach our children to treat everyone with respect just as my father taught me. Please let us teach our children about fairness and equality not about exclusion.

In closing, I would like to read a quote from Frederick Douglass that he made at the International Council of Women in Seneca Falls New York in 1848, Douglas said this about women's rights,

*"When I ran away from slavery, it was for myself; when I advocated emancipation, it was for my people; but when I stood up for the rights of women, self was out of the question, and I found a little nobility in the act."*

Please pass HB6452 An Act Concerning Discrimination and find that nobility in your heart.

Thank you.