

Written Statement of  
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to the

Joint Committee on Judiciary  
Connecticut General Assembly

*SUPPORT AN ACT CONCERNING DISCRIMINATION (HB 6452)*

March 19, 2009

Chairman McDonald, Chairman Lawlor, members of the committee, thank you so much for adding my voice to the others you're hearing today. My name is Allyson Robinson. I work as Associate Director of Diversity for transgender concerns with the Human Rights Campaign, America's largest lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender civil rights organization, and I'm here today to testify on behalf of HRC's over 20,000 members in Connecticut. But more importantly, I'm here simply as a transgender American to lift up my voice on behalf of the thousands of transgender residents of this state who are rendered voiceless by the very real and persistent threat of discrimination.

I am able to speak out for them because I'm one of the lucky ones, one of the privileged few in our transgender community. I have a wife, children, family and friends who love, support, and encourage me. I have meaningful work that allows me to preserve my sense of human dignity, with an employer committed to evaluating me solely on the basis of my ability to do my job. I have a roof over my head and I enjoy three meals a day; I haven't had to violate my moral principles to keep my family clothed, sheltered, and fed. I worship with a community of faith that embraces me, values my gifts, and is fighting for my rights. And I'm fortunate enough to live in a place where I can dine in a restaurant, shop in a store, or take my children to a public

playground without fear of being kicked out or having police summoned—a place where those basic rights are protected by the law. All of these things are blessings most Americans take for granted, but which no transgender person can.

I call them blessings very deliberately. As a person of faith, the blessing I seek for transgender people in Connecticut is the simple right to “seek peace and pursue it,” in the words of my tradition’s sacred texts, and to do so in a way that is congruent not only with our faith, but also with the best understanding of medical and mental health professions. And as an ordained minister – I led Baptist congregations for nearly a decade prior to my transition – I have seen dozens of my former congregants, seminary classmates, colleagues, and friends make peace with my transition. I’m proud to say that almost every one of them has come to embrace me as a sister. Moreover, they have come to recognize the discrimination faced by the transgender community and have embraced their own duty as people of faith to stand against it. In doing so, they stand alongside President Obama, who has established a non-discrimination policy covering gender identity for his administration, and who has enthusiastically committed to sign a gender identity inclusive federal Employment Non-Discrimination Act when it reaches his desk.

This moment, this very day, is perhaps the most crucial your transgender constituents have ever faced. The decisions you make here today and in the days to come will determine the way of life for future generations of transgender people in your state. For some, it will make the difference between life and death. I urge you to affirm their basic humanity, and mine, by passing this important legislation. Thank you.