Rev. Joshua Mason Pawelek
Unitarian Universalist Society: East in Manchester, CT
Testimony in Support of HB 6452
March 19, 2009

I am the Rev. Josh Pawelek, parish minister of the Unitarian Universalist Society: East in Manchester, CT. I am deeply thankful for this opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 6452, which seeks a very small addition to Connecticut's non-discrimination laws, yet which will make a huge difference in not only the lives of all transgender people in Connecticut, but in the lives of a number of my parishioners and a number of my close, personal friends.

Transgender people face discrimination on a daily basis and need clear and uniform protection against discrimination from the state. As one who provides pastoral care to transgender people I am very familiar with this discrimination and very aware of the need for reliable protection from the state. I know people who are considering making the physical transition from male to female or female to male, who are terrified of sharing this information in the workplace, especially with supervisors or bosses, with landlords, with healthcare professionals, with their religious communities, with family and friends all because they know there is a high likelihood of facing discrimination as a result—of losing work, of losing housing, of being erroneously diagnosed with mental illness, of being ostracized from church or synagogue, of losing the support of family and friends, of being assaulted because of their gender identity and then not being taken seriously by police and the courts. I know people who crossdress, who are terrified of sharing this part of their lives for all these same reasons. I know intersexuals who are terrified of their true physical identity being exposed for all these same reasons.

And their fears aren't imagined. They are based on personal experience of losing work and being unable to find work; of having been forced out of housing or of being unable to find housing; of having been mishandled by medical and psychiatric professionals; of not having been taken seriously by law enforcement officials and the judicial system; and of have been exposed to violence and murder.

In the Unitarian Universalist Association we emphasize two very important principles. The first is "respect for the inherent worth and dignity of every person." The second is the pursuit of "justice, equity and compassion in human relations." I support HB 6452—and I asked you to support HB 6452— because it is consistent with both of these principles. In seeking to protect transgender people from discrimination it affirms their inherent worth and dignity. In seeking to protect transgender people from discrimination it promotes justice and equity. In seeking to protect transgender people from discrimination it proclaims that Connecticut practices compassion in relation to all its citizens.

Passage of HB 6452 will ensure that all people are clearly and uniformly protected from discrimination regardless of their gender identity or expression. Passage will make a huge difference in the lives of transgender people in Connecticut. I thank you for your support of this bill.