

My name is Katie Hearn. I am a student at the University of Connecticut School of Social Work. I work as an intern at the Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence. I am here today to testify on bill #6452, An Act Concerning Discrimination. I favor this bill and hope that you will support it. Anti-discrimination law in Connecticut explicitly offers protections on the basis of race, national origin, sex, and sexual orientation, but it is not yet explicitly inclusive of everyone. The phrase “gender identity or expression,” as defined in Connecticut’s hate crimes law, should be added to Connecticut’s anti-discrimination law because there is a need: transgendered individuals are subject to discrimination in social services agencies, housing, health care, employment, and many other areas.

A study done in San Francisco, by Minter and Daly (2003), reported that nearly one in every two respondents had experienced discrimination in employment. According to the study, anti-transgender bias can affect a person’s ability to be hired, promoted, or offered training opportunities, and can lead to termination. Survey data highlights the consequences of such discrimination: 64% of respondents made less than \$25,000 per year and 79% made less than \$50,000; 40% lacked health care coverage. Discrimination leads to the disenfranchisement of transgender people from society. Anti-discrimination law should necessarily afford protections to all of those who need it. The Connecticut Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities acknowledges that current law does protect individuals based on gender identity and expression; passage of this bill would serve to clarify those protections, and make those protected by it more aware of their rights and obligations.

This is not a matter of special rights, but, rather, equal protections.