

March 19, 2009

Legislators and concerned parties:

WAVE (Working Against Violence Everywhere) is a coalition of individuals who work for or with organizations that prevent sexual assault and domestic violence, including CONNSACS (Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services, Inc.) and CCADV (Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence). We promote education, advocacy, policies and services that respect the diverse needs of all victims and survivors as people who vary in sex, gender identity, and sexual orientation.

In furtherance of our mission, we urge you to support *An Act Concerning Discrimination*, which would add "gender identity or expression" to the list of protected characteristics in Connecticut's anti-discrimination statutes, without exception or qualification. It's time for Connecticut to affirmatively declare its intention to protect all citizens of this state from this type of discrimination.

We are concerned that opponents of this bill are spreading misleading and distracting information about risks of sexual predators entering women's restrooms. Here are the facts:

- 13 states and over 100 cities and towns already have laws similar to the one proposed here. "Transgender impersonation" by a sexual predator to gain access to a restroom has not been a problem in any of these places.
- **More importantly, anyone who entered a restroom in order to commit assault, battery, harassment or an invasion of privacy would NOT be shielded by this law.** Any such act is and would continue to be a crime, no matter who committed it.
- Meanwhile, *An Act Concerning Discrimination* legally protects those who enter a restroom for legitimate reasons. Transgender people currently use restrooms that are consistent with the way they present and define their gender identity. This is the safest way for them to take care of their biological need to use the restroom, the same as any other person.

As every one of us will attest, sexual violence is a very real problem in our society – and that threat is heightened for people who are, or are perceived as, transgender. It is counterproductive for opponents of this law to create unfounded anxiety about safety in women's restrooms by profiling transgender people, while ignoring the very real threats to safety that transgender people face under the uncertainty of the current law.

Accordingly, we urge legislators and members of the public alike to support the passage of an inclusive anti-discrimination law that will make everyone in our state safer.

Sincerely,

-WAVE membership