

**Testimony of Gretchen Raffa, Planned Parenthood of Connecticut,
in support of HB 6452 *An Act Concerning Discrimination*
March 19, 2009**

Officers:

Rev. Maria LaSala
Chair

Kay J. Maxwell
Vice Chair

Deborah Freedman
Secretary

Amelia Renkert-Thomas, J.D.
Treasurer

Nancy Rosen
Assistant Treasurer

Board of Directors:

Sandra P. Arnold

Jenny Carrillo

Maria Cruz-Saco, Ph.D.

Nicole Elkon

Delores Greenlee

Nancy Hutson, Ph.D.

Jeannette Ickovics, Ph.D.

Sue Hessel

Valerie Seiling Jacobs, J.D.

Barry Kramer

Shannon W. Perry

Maria Sanchez

Cyndi Billian Stern

Dorna Stover

Richard Sugarman

Leadership Committee:

Mrs. Malcolm Baldrige

David Bingham, MD

Atty. Gen. Richard Blumenthal

Francine E. Goldstein

Eunice S. Groark

Chester W. Kitchings Jr.

Dorothy O. Mills

Jack and Donna Moffly

Rabbi Robert Orkand

Betsy Russell

Ann E. Sheffer

Joan L. Tweedy

Sandra G. Wagenfeld

Joan Melber Warburg

Joanne Woodward

President & CEO:

Judy Tabar

Senator McDonald, Representative Lawlor and members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Gretchen Raffa, Community Organizer for Planned Parenthood of CT testifying in support of HB6452, *An Act Concerning Discrimination*. Planned Parenthood of CT serves about 65,000 patients yearly for reproductive and sexual health services. As health care providers we have taken appropriate steps to promote the health of our lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) patients by looking at our policies, clinical practices and staff training to improve access to quality health care for all individuals who come to our health centers.

Transgender people are underserved in our health care system and this is only one form of the discrimination they face in our society. Transgender, transsexual and gender non-conforming people face discrimination in health care for a number of reasons including lack of knowledge of their specific health needs, lack of qualified and trained medical providers and lack of health insurance and/or coverage for specific health needs.

Because of the urgent need for health care providers who can address the specific needs of the transgender community we are committed to having a non-discriminatory environment. In our mission to provide quality and sensitive health care we have made changes on health forms and continue to examine ways to make our health centers more welcoming and open to transgender patients. We have made it an agency wide policy to have gender neutral/private restrooms in our health centers and administrative office. To address the specific health needs of patients who identify as transgender and are in the process of transitioning we will be offering hormone replacement therapy in our New Haven health center in the upcoming year.

In addition, Planned Parenthood of CT has a non-discrimination hiring policy which includes gender identity/expression. We realize that not everyone has yet come to an appreciation of these concerns, which is why it is so vital that transgender people have places where they *can* feel safe and welcome, along with allies who can meet their needs with understanding, not judgment.

As a Community Organizer working on this issue for several years I continue to hear heartbreaking personal stories from transgender identifying and gender non-conforming people who shared with me barriers they have faced not only in receiving appropriate and sensitive health care but also other biases they encounter in their everyday lives, including violence and hate. It is time for Connecticut to join the growing number of states who have guaranteed protection against discrimination for all citizens. We urge you to support HB 6452 *An Act Concerning Discrimination*, to protect the basic human rights of all people in Connecticut by including gender identity and expression among the protections Connecticut guarantees its citizens. Thank you.