

**Testimony in Support of HB 6452: An Act Concerning Discrimination**  
**Deja Nicole Greenlaw**

Thank you Rep. Lawlor and Sen. McDonald and members of the Judiciary Committee. I am in support of HB 6452. It is important that this legislation passes so that transgender and gender non-conforming people are protected from discrimination in so many ways, including employment. I testify today as a transgender woman whose employer is a model for businesses and our state. My story is a good one, but this law would protect my transgender brothers and sisters who can *still* be fired from their jobs in Connecticut just because of their gender expression.

I live in Enfield, Connecticut and was fortunate enough to be working as a Production Planner in a Fortune 500 company in Connecticut when I transitioned from male to female in November 2007. I had been working at my job for 15 years when I told my Human Resource Director of my plans to become female. She was quite receptive and immediately went to work on it-- she scheduled meetings to inform other employees of my change from male to female, encouraged questions, and set a tone of respect for me. My company is a large one, and already had several other employees who had changed genders. So, the policies and procedures were already in place to guide the company, and they were followed to a "T". I was the first one to transition in my division and it went very smoothly and without incident.

I continued my job as female and went on to receive a Professional Achievement Award late last year for my part in a very profitable project for my company. It is wonderful to be recognized at work for your accomplishments and it is even more wonderful to receive that award when you receive it after you transition to the gender that you truly are.

My employer was very supportive and well prepared and I couldn't have asked for more. But, sadly, I have known many transgender people who have lost their jobs upon transitioning to the other gender. Many were performing quite well in their jobs before their transition but it didn't seem to matter to their employers, who immediately fired them. This act ended their careers and means of livelihood. This is a tragedy.

It is not easy being transgender. You are born into one gender physically and you have the mind and spirit of the other gender. It is very confusing, and it is very hard to accept who you really are and what you must do to finally become that person. When I was growing up I couldn't talk to anyone about my confused feelings, not my friends, not my family, not my church, no one. It was very scary and lonely and one has to go through great amounts of shame and denial and finally acceptance. It wasn't easy but I'm very glad that I did it and I am so grateful that my employer understood that my job performance had everything to do with my qualifications and experience, rather than my gender expression. I'm proud to work for them.

I want all my transgender brothers and sisters to have that same opportunity at their jobs. After all, all we want to do is to be able to go to work and to support ourselves and our loved ones and to pursue our dreams just like everyone else.

Please find it in your heart to vote yes on HB6452 – An Act Concerning Discrimination.

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