

I am writing this letter to encourage you to support HB 6599, an act to add gender identity and gender expression to CT's non-discrimination law.

I made a commitment to myself, when I chose to become a teacher, that I was going to be nice and fair, and do whatever I could to allow my students to be the best people they could possibly be. I made a commitment to becoming an advocate for GLBT folks, when my best friend came out to me and I learned what it was like to be a gay person in a world where your family distanced itself from you and your church deserted you, and you feared for your job and maybe your life. That was 40 years ago. In the following years, I became an advisor to my high school's Gay-Straight Alliance and became a member of Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG). I consider the work I did helping my school fight discrimination some of the best work I ever did in my long career.

This is 2011, and bill HB 6599 is all about being nice and fair, and all about allowing people to be the best they can be. In a world where there is too much mean-spiritedness, people are living amongst others who are very different from themselves- different races, ages, religions, sexual orientations and gender identities and expressions- and often they don't even see it. By opening our eyes to the wonder and beauty of those differences, folks could learn that people are people, generally good when given a chance and all wanting to be treated with dignity and fairness.

I want to live in a culturally diverse community and state, not a monoculture, and I want that state to be a place where people are equally protected by the law. Equal protection is the right thing to do, a socially progressive goal which will encourage fair-minded people to want to live here. As a retired teacher, this is not only what I want for my state, it is what I want for my school, a place where people are allowed to be the best they can be, protected from discrimination. This is the best step we can take to providing equal protection under the law for all folks. Your support is important. Thank-you for your inclusive vote.

Sincerely,
Barbara Althen
50 Fountain Street
Norwich, CT. 06360