

Testimony in support of HB6599, *An Act Concerning Discrimination*
Judiciary Committee
Carrie Kline
March 21, 2011

Senator Coleman, Representative Fox, and members of the committee,

My name is Carrie Kline; I am a life-long resident of Bridgeport, CT and a student at the University of Connecticut pursuing my MSW. I am here today to strongly support HB 6599, *An Act Concerning Discrimination*. The addition of gender identity and expression to non-discrimination policy would protect people from being discriminated against because of their gender-related identity or how they choose to express their gender.

When policies are not in effect to protect people from discrimination there can be devastating consequences. Currently in the state of Connecticut a person's most basic human rights can be violated due to the lack of robust non-discrimination legislation. Transgender or gender non-conforming residents can be denied the rights of healthcare, housing, credit, employment, and public accommodation, simply because of their gender identity and expression.

By not having gender identity and expression in the non-discrimination legislation, the state of Connecticut is covertly approving of this discrimination and sending the message to its residents that discriminating based on gender identity and expression is acceptable and condoned. Not only as a resident of Connecticut and as a social work student concerned with equality, but as a person who has friends and loved ones who are transgender, I want my state to take a strong stance and protect its residents against discrimination.

Thirteen other states, along with several large companies and universities have already added gender identity and expression to their non-discrimination policy. This law does not seek to give individuals "special" treatment or in any way infringe on religious rights. It is meant to protect people from harmful discrimination. That is exactly what the passage of HB 6599 would do. It will add Connecticut to the growing list of states and businesses that stand up against discrimination. It will ensure the rights of people who are being discriminated against because of their gender identity or expression. It will guarantee that my friends and loved ones do not have to fear that their human rights can be taken away.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Carrie Kline
Bridgeport, CT, 06606