



CONNECTICUT AFL-CIO

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Testimony of Lori Pelletier, Secretary-Treasurer
Connecticut AFL-CIO

Before the Judiciary Committee
March 21, 2011

Senator Coleman and Representatives Fox and members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Lori Pelletier and I serve as the Secretary-Treasurer of the Connecticut AFL-CIO and I am here to testify on behalf of our 900 affiliated local unions representing 220,000 members who reside in all 169 of our cities and towns.

I am here to testify in favor of H.B. No. 6599 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING DISCRIMINATION.

Thirty seven words in this bill make all the difference to a worker in Connecticut.

(21) "Gender identity or expression" means a person's gender related identity, appearance or behavior, whether or not that gender related identity, appearance or behavior is different from that traditionally associated with the person's physiology or assigned sex at birth.

Why? Because this bill is about basic human rights, it's about fairness and justice and most importantly it's about respect. No worker should be faced with the possibility of losing their job, being singled out just because of who they are. We don't allow it when it comes to the religion we chose to follow then we should not allow it for being who we are born to be. This bill when passed will not create any "special rights," but simply affords to all Connecticut workers and citizens the basic protection from employment discrimination based on gender identity or expression. It is based on the labor principle that every worker should be judged solely on his or her merits as a worker.

Opponents of this bill are the same people who oppose many of the rights that protect people everyday. Their ignorance is hurtful and is used as a weapon against hardworking Connecticut citizens. We have all seen this type of furor before. In 1919 it was used to against women wanting the right to vote, and in 1964 it was used to perpetuate hate as the Civil Rights Act was being passed and in 2007 this type of ugliness raised its head to try to undermine basic marriage protections.

The Connecticut AFL-CIO has been and will continue to be at the forefront of ending workplace discrimination that's why we were so proud to pass a resolution unanimously at our 2010 convention supporting the protection of workers from discrimination based on gender identity and expression. We urge the members of this Committee and the entire General Assembly to support this bill as well. In 2011 no worker should be a victim of discrimination.

We appreciate the Committee holding this public hearing and we look forward to working with you to see that this bill is passed and signed into law.

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