

Testimony in support of HB6599
Rev. Michelle Lee LaGrave
March 21, 2011

I am the Reverend Michelle LaGrave and I am here to speak in support of HB6599: An Act Concerning Discrimination. I am currently serving the Unitarian Universalist Church of Greater Bridgeport as its Sabbatical Minister. I am also the partner of a person who is transgender.

My partner, Micah, is a clergy candidate with the Metropolitan Community Church and a chaplain intern at Griffin Hospital in Derby, CT. Together, we live with my mother, Nancy LaGrave, a retired special education teacher. Each of us has dedicated our lives to improving the lives of others. I am proud of my small family.

I also worry about my family a lot. I worry about Micah's physical safety when he goes out alone; sometimes I feel anxious even when I am with him and we find ourselves in a new or unfamiliar situation.

I also worry about Micah when he goes to the pharmacy to fill his prescriptions. I have seen the way the pharmacist stares at him. I worry that one day the pharmacist, who has the power to withhold Micah's life-giving medications, will do so, saying that Micah's identification has not passed the pharmacist's scrutiny.

The stress and anxiety of encountering prejudice and discrimination is not limited to my partner. The two of us live with my mother and whatever difficulties Micah faces impacts us all. I worry about the next time we move. How hard will it be to find housing? If we are denied housing or kicked out, what will happen to us? What will happen to my mom? I worry about our family's economic stability. If Micah can't get employment or is fired because of his gender identity, will I be able to support us all by myself? I am not so sure, not on a minister's salary, and not in these days when so many families find they need two incomes in order to survive.

I speak to you today as the partner of a transgender person who has personally experienced the effects of prejudice and discrimination rooted in gender identity and expression. I also speak to you today as a clergy person who has witnessed the struggles of many others. I am proud to be Micah's partner and I am proud to represent a faith tradition which has long worked to welcome people of all gender identities into our midst.

Please support 6599 and help to end discrimination based on gender identity and expression. It's easy to do, it will help many people, and it's only fair.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Michelle LaGrave