



Advocating for women's rights  
and opportunities in Connecticut

## ctEQUALITY

Testimony in support of House Bill 6599: *An Act Concerning Discrimination*  
Submitted Sally Tamarkin, Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund and ctEQUALITY  
March 21, 2011

I am submitting this testimony on behalf of CWEALF, a statewide, non-profit organization dedicated to empowering women, girls, and their families in order to achieve equal opportunities in their personal and professional lives, and ctEQUALITY, a coalition of organizations from all over the state working to add gender identity and gender expression to our state non-discrimination law. For over 34 years, CWEALF has worked to ensure that all people, regardless of their gender or sexual orientation, receive equal rights and treatment. CWEALF is a leading organization in ctEQUALITY. Today I am here to urge you to support HB 6599: *An Act Concerning Discrimination*.

If enacted, HB 6599 would simply add gender identity and gender expression to our state's non-discrimination laws, thereby making protections set forth by a 2000 CHRO ruling explicit and uniform. As we know, it is not sufficient to protect the rights of a vulnerable population with only an agency ruling. To ensure that our fellow citizens are protected from discrimination, we enact laws that make those protections explicit and uniform.

Currently, in the state of Connecticut, discrimination on the basis of gender identity or expression in employment, education, housing, lending and public accommodations is not prohibited by law. HB 6599 would do for transgender and gender non-conforming individuals what our state's non-discrimination law does for a great many vulnerable populations—ensure that their rights are protected by a state law. This is simply a matter of fairness—no one should have to live in fear of losing their job for any reason other than job performance, including transgender people. Passing HB 6599 affirms CT's commitment to treating all of its citizens equally, while bringing us one step closer to being a place where all residents have equal access to the basic necessities of life and livelihood—employment, shelter, a steady income, and the freedom to live as who we are without fear of being denied access to the most basic building blocks of everyday life.

At CWEALF we receive calls from individuals who have been fired or contracts not renewed when their status as a transgender individual is discovered. If you know anything about filing a complaint with the CHRO, you will understand that the energy and time that is necessary to complete this process can be overwhelming. Often the people who come to us just want their jobs back. They have already experienced much humiliation and do not want to, nor often can, expend the time to see through a discrimination complaint because it will continue to highlight their 'otherness.' Not only would this bill, if enacted, guarantee a means of seeking legal remedy against discrimination. Additionally, if Connecticut had non-discrimination law which included gender identity and gender expression, the process for educating businesses and communities would be easier and bring about greater change. A law prohibiting discrimination on the basis of gender identity or expression would educate employers, lenders, landlords and all others subject to obey the law on what practices are acceptable and which are not. Currently,



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because there is no state law with explicit protections, what constitutes discrimination based on gender identity or expression may be unclear or only partially understood.

If this bill becomes law, Connecticut will be following the lead of 13 other states, Washington, DC, over 130 municipalities, and a variety of both private and public employers and institutions throughout our state and country who have laws that offer protection from discrimination based on gender identity or expression. In passing these laws, these entities understand that communities, workforces, campuses, and a variety of other institutions are at their strongest, healthiest and most efficient when all their members' livelihoods are protected from discrimination.

Finally, state laws send important signals about the state's values, it is important today for you to pass this legislation so that our transgender brother, sisters, friends can live with basic human dignity. I urge you once again to pass HB 6599.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.