

Testimony of Austin Longendyke
In Support of HB 6599: *An Act Concerning Discrimination*
March 21, 2011

My name is Austin Longendyke, and I am testifying in support of HB 6599, *An Act Concerning Discrimination*. I am a sophomore at the University of Connecticut, double majoring in Women's Studies and American Studies, and a resident of Norwich, CT. As a member of the LGBTQ community, I am well aware of the discrimination that non-heterosexuals face in their everyday lives. Adding gender identity and expression to Connecticut's non-discrimination law would be a step in the right direction toward a more safe and equal state for all of its citizens.

Not having gender identity and gender expression explicitly on the state's non-discrimination law makes it permissible for workplaces, landlords, educational institutions, etc. to discriminate against individuals whose gender does not match their biological sex. According to a survey of transgendered Connecticut residents, 27% of the respondents lost a job due to their gender non-conformity and 38% of transgendered students reported a physical assault against them¹. Adding gender identity and expression to the non-discrimination law will allow these individuals to live their lives knowing that they cannot be denied a wage or protection against physical attack because they do not meet society's expectations for gender. It is essential that the state provide these very basic protections for all of its citizens, and I urge all legislators to support this vital act.

The discrimination that transgendered people experience in their everyday lives is the result of society's refusal to recognize anyone outside of the male/female gender binary, and passing HB 6599 will not result in immediate societal acceptance. What it will do, however, is make it more difficult for individuals to act on their bias against gender non-conforming citizens, and that is a good start toward equality for all Connecticut residents. Just as it is unlawful to discriminate against one because of his or her race, sexual orientation, sex, and national origin, it should be unlawful to discriminate against one because of his or her gender identity or expression. Everyone deserves the same opportunities in life regardless of who they are, and the state should strive to make sure that these opportunities are always accessible.

Thank you very much for your attention on this matter,

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¹ <http://www.ctequality.com/storage/Connecticut%20NTDS%20State%20Report%20FINAL.pdf>