

Good morning Senator Coleman, Representative Fox, and Members of the Committee

My name is Barbara Gurr, and I have lived in Connecticut all my life. I've lived in Berlin for the last 10 years. I'm here today to urge you to pass House Bill 6599, An Act Concerning Discrimination. I come to you today as a former public school teacher and as an employee of the University of Connecticut; a Church member; a community volunteer; and as the mother of two children, who are the twin centers of my universe.

Charlie, who is in third grade, is an excellent student; he loves soccer, basketball, baseball -- and playing with his Nintendo DS. He's learning how to play the recorder in school and thinks "Hot Cross Buns" is the best song ever. Hailey is in first grade. She goes to gymnastics with three of her friends, loves Katy Perry's song "Firework", and wants to be a chef when she grows up. But last week she wanted to be a teacher. We'll see what next week brings.

One of my children is transgender. We're pretty open about this in our community -- our friends and neighbors know, our Church members know, our school community knows. And so far, everyone has been very supportive. This is amazing to my husband and I, because we know, *we know*, that this is not the case for far too many transgender children and their families, right here in Connecticut, even in our hometown, where there are several transgender adults and adolescents. Of course there are. *We know* that the mental health statistics for transgender adolescents and adults are overwhelmingly negative. Transgender adolescents have high rates of depression, of suicide, self-injury, drug and alcohol abuse, and risky sexual behaviors. My daughter will have to navigate a path that leads far too many children and adults to intense suffering, not because of who they are, but because of the lack of knowledge, support and

protection afforded to who they are. My son will always be challenged to keep his little sister safe, and to navigate his own social world as the big brother of a transgender sibling. Maybe, God willing, my husband and I will be able to keep our children safe. But if there's one thing that raising a transgender child is teaching us, it's that nobody, no family, raises a healthy child alone.

I am proud to be a citizen of this state where I have lived and worked my entire life, because in so many ways, Connecticut has been a leader for social justice in our nation. You have the opportunity to be leaders today, by passing House Bill 6599 and joining the 13 states who have already passed non-discrimination laws that include gender identity and gender expression. Adding the phrase "gender identity or expression" to Connecticut's current non-discrimination law will ensure that all citizens of this state will be protected under the law explicitly and uniformly. You have the opportunity today to help ensure that these protections will be in place, and further, that they CAN NOT be denied to anyone. You have the opportunity today to help my husband and I raise healthy children. I am not too proud to say I need your help. My children need your help. We cannot do this alone. Today, you can help us by simply recognizing that transgender people are, of course, worthy of the same legal protections that other people are worthy of.

Thank you.