

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

Senator Eric Coleman, Representative Gerry Fox, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Jacqueline Martone, and I am a student at the University of Connecticut. I am testifying in support of HB 6599: *An Act Concerning Discrimination*. I am a proud citizen of Connecticut and the many progressive laws that have been passed here. However, I am thoroughly disappointed that our state has no laws that protect our citizens on the grounds of gender identity and expression. Currently, 13 states, Washington, DC, and over 130 municipalities have laws that prohibit discrimination on the basis of gender identity or gender expression<sup>1</sup>. I do not believe that there is any excuse for Connecticut to not have these same protections for our citizens. To insinuate that transgendered people are less deserving than any other group of people from discrimination is wrong, and acutely contrasts the values of our state.

As a Planned Parenthood of Southern New England Campus Action Intern, I had the opportunity to partake in several events focused on transgender issues. The first was the Transgender Day of Remembrance, which I attended last December. Many in attendance volunteered to read stories of violent acts committed against the transgender community. I will never forget the atrocities that I heard about, simply based on the victims' gender identity. Earlier this month, we hosted a ctEquality event at UConn, and we were fortunate enough to hear from transgendered people who were unfairly fired from work and faced discrimination based entirely on gender expression. One individual was constantly lied to at their place of employment in order to get them fired, while another, who held a high-ranking position before being fired, was discriminated against behind the scenes and let go with no benefits. During this trying time for our economy, it is absurd that some of the best and brightest individuals are turned away for something out of their control. It is even more disturbing that prejudiced employers are allowed to get away with these malicious practices, and that our state continues to ignore it as though it is not happening.

This bill is not only important for economic reasons, but on the grounds of human rights. Every human being deserves to be protected from violence and prejudice. For our state to still not have a law that defends all citizens from these acts is outrageous. I am a Connecticut resident, and I want to see this bill pass for the LGBTQ members of my community, my family, and throughout the state who are still struggling to be accepted for who they are. Our state is in the unique position to end discrimination for transgendered people. After the tumultuous year the LGBTQ community has faced, which included teen suicides and countless acts of violence and bigotry, passing this bill will show that our state values all of its citizens, and regards discriminatory practices against the community on any level as completely unacceptable. Thus, I advocate the passage of this legislation to show that Connecticut believes in all of its citizens and our inalienable human rights. Thank you.

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.ctequality.com/storage/ctEQ%20one%20pagcr%202-22-11.pdf>