

Testimony of Jesse R.
In support of HB 6599, *An Act Concerning Discrimination*
Judiciary Committee
March 21, 2011

Senator Coleman, Representative Fox and respected members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Jesse and I am a fourth generation Connecticut resident, born and raised in Waterbury and have been a Fairfield resident for the past six years. I am here to testify in support of HB 6599: An Act Concerning Discrimination.

I am a happily married man with a beautiful and supportive wife and two amazing step-children. I have been employed full time in a management capacity by a Fortune 100 corporation for the past six and a half years and I have served as a board member of the TCC, Fairfield County's only LGBTQ community center, for the past two years.

I am proud to live in a state where lawmakers have historically had the best interests of its residents in mind, passing laws to protect many minority groups from discrimination in the workplace, in schools, from financial institutions and when seeking housing. The transgender and gender-non-conforming residents of CT need and deserve these securities.

This isn't only about protecting transgender people, this law would protect all Connecticut residents gay, straight, boy, girl, man, woman, someone who is both and those who are neither.

I know firsthand that growing up feeling that your gender identity is in conflict with the sex that you were assigned at birth is an overwhelming and painful process emotionally for many people on the transgender spectrum. The fear of being discriminated against, or worse the lack of civil protections when we are discriminated against can be harmful and prevent people from living in peace, safety and happiness which is something that all humans deserve.

As a transgender man and a resident of Connecticut, I have been fortunate enough that I have not faced discrimination based on my gender identity. I transitioned in my current job and felt safe to do so because my company includes gender identity and expression in their non-discrimination policy but I still worry about my future and whether or not I'll join the ranks of those who have faced discrimination. What if the next time I apply for credit, or try to find housing I don't get the loan or apartment just because I'm transgender? What if I end up working for a smaller company that doesn't have an anti-discrimination policy that includes gender identity or expression? I could be fired just for being me.

I can't stress how important it is that the Judiciary Committee supports the passage of HB 6599 and that it is passed expeditiously in the House and Senate so that my friends and I can move on in peace knowing that our rights are just as important as anyone else's. It's time to make living in fear of legal discrimination for this community a part of history.

Thank you,
Jesse R.
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