



Written Testimony for Anti-Discrimination Bill Hearing March 21, 2011

Submitted by Linda Estabrook

An Act Concerning Discrimination ~ HB 6599

To prohibit discrimination on the basis of gender identity or expression

My name is Linda Estabrook. I am Executive Director of the Hartford Gay and Lesbian Health Collective. Our agency serves transgender individuals in several of our medical, prevention, support and education programs. I am also a recent graduate of the Master's in Public Health Program at the University of Connecticut. The focus of my MPH final project was transgender health and law issues which included producing the first of what has now become an annual conference, Transgender Lives: The Intersection of Health and Law.

Through my work at the Health Collective and my studies in the MPH program, I have developed a much better understanding of the issues faced by friends, colleagues and clients who do not conform to the gender stereotypes. The discrimination faced by individuals in so many facets of their lives is pervasive in our community and devastating for many. These are just people trying to live their lives as who they are. Nothing more.

The "trickle-down" effect of discrimination includes loss of employment or inability to obtain gainful employment. Minimal or no income means that some of these individuals become dependent upon entitlement programs to survive. Not having gainful employment oftentimes means that access to healthcare is significantly limited due to lack of health insurance, as employment and medical insurance are so often tied together. It would be better for our state if these individuals could participate fully in our society which includes being employed and paying taxes.

Being relegated to a "less than" status without the protections this law can provide keeps many gender non-conforming individuals in a "less than" status, without equal access to the many services, employment opportunities, public accommodations and health care access that most of us simply take for granted. Demanding that someone deny who they are at their core to fully participate in society inflicts much damage on that individual.

The World Health Organization defines health as "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity." It is important to keep this in mind as an important reason to pass this legislation.

I strongly encourage that CT join other states in providing these important protections. Thank you.

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