

Matt Smith
Alderman, Ward 9
City of New Haven
563 Orange Street
New Haven, CT 06511

March 21, 2011

Judiciary Committee
Legislative Office Building
300 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT

Re: HB 6599: An Act Concerning Discrimination

Dear Members of the Judiciary Committee,

I come before you today to ask that you continue to embrace the values of fairness and equality for all by supporting House Bill 6599: An Act Concerning Discrimination.

My name is Matt Smith and I serve on the New Haven Board of Alderman, representing the ninth ward. I bring with me the voices of the 4,000 people I represent who understand that all persons should be treated fairly and equitably.

All hardworking people in our state, including transgendered people should have the chance to earn a living and provide for themselves and their families. Nobody should have to live in fear that they can legally be fired for reasons that have nothing to do with their job performance.

Many people across our state face the anxiety of worrying that they might lose their jobs or are at the mercy of an unfair boss or company. Similarly, we all believe someone should not be denied housing simply because they are transgendered. However, each and everyday people live with these very real fears which can shattered their lives. Non-discrimination ordinances aim to correct and prevent these injustices.

To this end, I am proud to inform this committee that along with several colleagues, I will be co-sponsoring legislation introducing gender identity and expression protection into New Haven's non-discrimination ordinance. It is my, With the support of my colleagues, New Haven will join the 13 states and over 130 municipalities who already passed and successfully implemented these policies. We will also join colleges and universities in the state, like Yale, Wesleyan, Connecticut College and The University of New Haven. I believe that all people in New Haven and throughout CT should be treated fairly under the law.

Passage of this law, prohibiting discrimination based on gender identity and expression achieves three important goals:

It will create policies with uniform protections.

It makes explicit the scope of coverage to anyone who encounters the law and is subject to its mandates or coverage.

It affirms our state's commitment to fair treatment and freedom from discrimination for all it's citizens.

Sadly, when communities are marginalized through discrimination, they become targets of violence which is why, in 2004, CT legislators voted by overwhelming majority to add gender identity and expression to our state hate crimes law, affirming that CT residents need legal protection on the bases of gender identity and gender expression.

Ultimately, the issue at stake is this: do you believe that all residents should be treated fairly and equally by the laws of our state?

I do.

Thank you for your time and allowing me to testify.

Sincerely,

Matt Smith
Alderman, Ward 9
City of New Haven