

**Connecticut Joint Committee on Judiciary in Support of Raised House
Bill No. 6599**

“An Act Concerning Discrimination”

Prepared Oral Testimony of

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Thank you Chairman Senator Coleman, Chairman Representative Fox, and Members of the Committee for allowing me the opportunity to testify before you today. I am a strong supporter of Raised House Bill No. 6599, an Act Concerning Discrimination, which would add gender identity and gender expression to existing Connecticut non-discrimination statutes.

My name is Meghan Stabler I am an IT business executive, a transsexual woman, and a transgender fairness and equality advocate. I serve on the Board of Directors for the Human Rights Campaign, the largest national LGBT civil rights organization. I am also a member of HRC’s National Business Council, which is a group of business executives that provides real-world examples, advice and expert counsel on LGBT workplace issues based on corporate experience and knowledge, to the Human Rights Campaign.

The need for the protections offered in HB 6599 is real. There is extensive evidence that transgender employees are regularly harassed, fired, not hired, and passed over for advancement without regard to their merit. A recent 2011 study from the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and NCTE, titled Injustice at Every Turn, found that transgender workers saw:

- Double the percentage rate of national unemployment, with rates for people of color up to four times that.
- Experience widespread mistreatment at work: Ninety percent (90%) of those surveyed reported experiencing harassment, mistreatment or discrimination on the job.
- Forty-seven percent (47%) said they had experienced an adverse job outcome, such as being fired, not hired or denied a promotion because of being transgender or gender non-conforming.
- Over one-quarter (26%) reported that they had lost a job due to being transgender or gender non-conforming.
- Respondents who had lost a job due to bias also experienced ruinous consequences such as four times the rate of homelessness compared to those who did not lose a job due to bias.
- Yet when supportive States, and Companies have inclusive laws the vast majority of those who transitioned from one gender to the other reported that they felt more comfortable at work and their job performance improved. I can personally attest to this fact.

Discrimination here in Connecticut mirror those of the survey and are equally alarming; indicating widespread discrimination based on gender identity/expression:

- 83% reported experiencing harassment or mistreatment on the job

- 27% lost a job
- 24% were denied a promotion
- 43% were not hired

Today, in 38 states, it is legal to fire someone because of their gender identity or gender expression. Let me repeat that. In 2011, in 38 states, I can be fired because of my gender identity regardless of my job performance or merit. Connecticut is one of those 38 states. But twelve States and the District of Columbia currently prohibit discrimination based on gender identity, and the clear trend is in favor of extending nondiscrimination laws to prohibit discrimination on the basis of gender identity and expression. In addition to these twelve states, hundreds of local municipalities and cities have enacted similar ordinances and many American companies have policies protecting their LGBT employees.

Adding "Gender Identity and Expression" to the existing Connecticut nondiscrimination statute does not create "special rights." It simply affords protection from discrimination based on irrational and meritless prejudice. This legislature has already recognized the need for such protections and the appropriateness of such protections by passing and expanding the nondiscrimination statute over many years. All that is at issue today is whether people who are transgender or gender nonconforming are entitled to be free from discrimination, or whether Connecticut will continue to allow discrimination against such people without providing any statutory recourse.

The importance of nondiscrimination laws cannot be overstated. Symbolically, they say to citizens of Connecticut, judge your fellow citizens by their integrity, character, and talents, not their gender identity, or their race or religion, for that matter. These laws also say that irrational hate or fear have no place in Connecticut's work place.

Chairman Coleman, Chairman Fox, members of the committee, in recent polls, 71% of Americans agree that job performance should be the standard for judging an employee, not whether they are transgender, or gay or lesbian. Americans rightly believe that their hard-working friends and neighbors should not be denied job opportunities, fired or otherwise be discriminated against just because of their gender identity. Yet law and society has lagged behind the reality of American life. It is time to bring Connecticut laws in line with the reality of American life. Connecticut will not be pioneering with the update to this statute, but following what so many other States, local municipalities and city governments have enacted over the last decade. It will also bring State law in line with the corporate world here in this great state.

Transgender people are Americans who lead incredibly successful, stable lives, are dedicated parents, contribute immeasurably to their communities, this state and their country.

I know, I am one of them.

Work is central to all of our lives. Our jobs enable us to support our families, develop our talents, contribute to our communities and our country, and realize our dreams. We all share the challenges of an economic downturn. But for far too many hardworking transgender people, those pressures are intensified by the fear that they can be denied job opportunities, fired or otherwise be discriminated against just because of whom they are. Transgender Americans, like everyone else, want

their success to reflect their skills, ambition, performance and dedication. But this modest goal is not a reality for many transgender people.

Because an employer in this state may legally fire, refuse to hire, or fail to promote an employee based upon gender identity or gender expression, transgender people are at a great disadvantage in the workplace.

America's top corporations and businesses know, in order to remain competitive, they must recruit and retain the best possible talent, including members of the transgender community

We are a country predicated on equality, occasionally road blocked by discrimination which is overcome through courage and fairness. Over the years, we evolve and embraced a more inclusive vision of what that means for this great country.

Given our country's current economic condition and unemployment rates, it is even more absurd than ever to marginalize an entire group of workers based on gender identity. Passing HB6599 will ensure that everyone can enjoy the freedom of life, succeed in the workplace and contribute to the state of Connecticut.

Some major corporations located in this state have adopted non-discrimination policies that protect their transgendered employees including, among others:

<u>Aetna Inc.</u>	Hartford
<u>Boehringer Ingelheim USA Corp.</u>	Ridgefield
<u>Diageo North America</u>	Norwalk
<u>Hartford Financial Services Group Inc., The</u>	Hartford
<u>UBS AG</u>	Stamford
<u>United Technologies Corp.</u>	Hartford
<u>Xerox Corp.</u>	Norwalk

These employers set dress and grooming standards for their transgender employees consistent with the employees job function, and based on the employees affirmed Gender Identity. They join over 337 Fortune corporations across America including BP America, Citigroup, Coors Brewing, Ernst & Young, Deloitte, General Mills, General Motors, Kaiser Permanente, Marriot International, Microsoft, Nike Starbucks, and Time Warner, who through policy, and real-world practice, have already assured workplace fairness and equality for transgender employees. These corporations understand that fairness and diversity are good for business. Companies that are located here in Connecticut, and that are within the scope of the bill, should meet the same standards.

I humbly and respectfully ask the members assure workplace fairness by passing HB6599 out of committee.

I sincerely appreciate the opportunity to testify today and look forward to addressing any questions you may have.

