

**Judiciary Committee Public Hearing**

Monday, March 21, 2011

**TESTIMONY OF THE Robert C. / Barbara C.**

**IN SUPPORT OF HB-6599**

**AN ACT CONCERNING DISCRIMINATION**

Chairman Coleman, Chairman Fox, distinguished members of the Committee.

Depending on where we meet, you may know me as Bob or as Barbara, and very possibly not know that I am transgender. I have known it since I was 5 years old, and have spent half a century in trying to resolve my gender issues. Being transgender is not a social construct. The first 25 years of my life were filled with an absence of vocabulary that would accurately explain my inner most identity and left me with only shame and guilt. I spent 30 plus years hiding in fear that my gender diversity would destroy my career and my livelihood. I have kept a secret that I long ago came to terms with, but have failed to find a way to make others feel comfortable in dealing with. I have failed to find a way to have my acclaimed talents as a male be equally bestowed on me as a female.

There is a persistent argument whether it is a case of nature or nurture, regardless; it is most importantly a journey, not a destination. I have never met a person who wanted to grow up and be transgender. Why would anyone want to elect a second-class life of discrimination and disenfranchisement? I have lived most of my adult life in two directions. As a male, I have won national and international acclaim in my career, yet as a woman who bares the label of transgender, I cannot even get considered for the same employment opportunities.

The opponents to HB-6599 will tell you their perceptions of everything that is wrong with giving someone like me equal rights and accommodations. They will tell you that I am somehow an abomination of their religious beliefs, and that I create an immeasurable disruption in the workplace or in public spaces. I disagree. Passage of HB-6599 will not change the moral fabric of our communities; it will not create any new dangers of morality. It will afford hundreds of citizens of our state, like me, the expectation to fair treatment in their quest for employment, housing, credit and access to public services.

I am one of the lucky ones. I have long since lost my embarrassment for being transgender; I have found a place to live where I feel relatively safe. I have been welcomed into a mainstream faith community who recognizes me as an equal, and has called on me to be part of their state-wide lay leadership. I speak frequently at high schools, colleges and even corporations throughout the state on what it means to be transgender. I feel very fortunate for these few privileges. Yet so many others aren't afforded these simple accommodations. Rather, they forfeit their homes, their jobs, and ultimately their sense of self. Their entire lives are devalued through the discrimination and persecution that HB-6599 would stop.

It is important to note that passage of this law is not exclusively to the benefit of transpersons. It also applies to every individual who doesn't quite fit the norms of gender expression. The flamboyant male and masculine female deserve equal rights and opportunities. To exclude any of us, for whatever reason is to deny us the liberties that are due every citizen of our state.

I urge you to support this bill because so many individual lives depend on it.

Thank you.