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**Testimony of Gretchen Raffa, Manager, Public Affairs & Community Organizing
Planned Parenthood of Southern New England, Inc.
In Support of HB 6599, An Act Concerning Discrimination
March 21, 2011**

Senator Coleman, Representative Fox and members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Gretchen Raffa, Manager of Public Affairs and Community Organizing at Planned Parenthood of Southern New England testifying in support of HB 6599, *An Act Concerning Discrimination*. Planned Parenthood of Southern New England serves over 63,000 patients yearly for reproductive and sexual health services. As health care providers we are committed to taking necessary steps to ensure a non-discriminatory environment for everyone. To promote the health of our lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) patients we are continuously looking at our policies, clinical practices and staff training to improve access to quality health care for all individuals who come to our health centers.

Transgender people are underserved in our health care system and this is only one form of the discrimination they face in our society. Transgender, transsexual and gender non-conforming people face discrimination in health care for a number of reasons including lack of knowledge of their specific health needs, lack of qualified and trained medical providers and lack of health insurance and/or coverage for specific health needs. A 2010 study of transgender people and health care access found participants reported that when they were sick or injured, many postponed medical care due to discrimination (28%) or inability to afford it (48%). The same study showed 19% reported being refused medical care due to their transgender or gender non-conforming status, with even higher numbers among people of color in the survey.¹

Because of the urgent need for health care providers who can address the specific needs of the transgender community we are committed to having a non-discriminatory environment. In our mission to provide quality and sensitive health care we have made changes on health forms and continue to examine ways to make our health centers more welcoming and open to transgender patients. We have made it an agency wide policy to have gender neutral/private restrooms in our health centers and administrative office. To address the specific health needs of patients who identify as transgender and may be in the process of transitioning we have added hormone therapy for transgender clients to our medical protocols and offer this service in our New Haven health center. We believe all Connecticut residents deserve fairness and equality, not only in accessing health care but in accessing employment, housing, education, public accommodations and all of their basic human rights.

In addition, Planned Parenthood of Southern New England has a non-discrimination hiring policy which includes gender identity/expression. We realize that not everyone has yet come to an appreciation of these concerns, which is why it is so vital that transgender people have places where they can feel safe and welcome, along with allies who can meet their needs with understanding, not judgment.

As an Organizer working on this issue for many years I continue to hear heartbreaking personal stories from transgender and gender non-conforming people who shared with me barriers they have faced not only in receiving appropriate and sensitive health care but also other discrimination they encounter in their everyday lives, including violence and hate. Connecticut has the opportunity to become one of the growing number of states and municipalities that have extended full civil rights to all residents-including transgender residents. We urge you to support HB 6599 *An Act Concerning Discrimination*, to protect the basic human rights of all people in Connecticut by including gender identity and expression among the protections Connecticut guarantees its citizens. Thank you.

¹Grant, Jaime M., Lisa A. Mottet, Justin Tanis, Jack Harrison, Jody L. Herman, and Mara Keisling. *Injustice at Every Turn: A Report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey*. Washington: National Center for Transgender Equality and National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, 2011. http://transequality.org/PDFs/NTDS_Report.pdf

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