

Written Testimony

Judiciary Committee Public Hearing
March 21, 2011
HB 6599 An Act Concerning Discrimination

Senate Chairman Eric D. Coleman
House Chairman Gerald M. Fox

For the past five years, many of us have been coming before you to offer testimony in support of HB 6599 –An Act Concerning Discrimination. As your constituents, we have shared many personal stories of what that discrimination looks and feels like and how it impacts our lives. I would like to thank my Representative, Melissa Olson, for her unwavering support and also the Members of the Judiciary Committee over the past few years who have worked tirelessly to pass this bill. This bill has introduced me firsthand to the legislative process and I have the greatest respect for the work that you are asked to accomplish in each session. Thank you.

Each year I review the statements submitted by so many of your constituents who plead for passage of this bill and I am moved and very impressed by their determination and their courage. As a mother of a transgender person, I have also come on several occasions to share my family's story. This is painful work. It is not easy to fight discrimination.

The pages of testimony that you see before you today only represent part of the truth. One needs to examine the findings of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey (available at www.thetaskforce.org and www.transequality.org) to understand the statistics for the 88 respondents from Connecticut. This survey helps us all recognize that discrimination is widely practiced in the workplace, in schools, in housing, and in health care. We can view the level of economic insecurity that is experienced and the amount of harassment and discrimination with regard to public accommodations or services, including hotels, restaurants, buses, airports, and government agencies. The results are astounding!

In the year 2000, the CT Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities (CHRO) declared that discrimination based on gender identity and expression was, in fact, sex discrimination. In 2004, CT legislators voted by overwhelming majority to add gender identity and expression to the hate crimes law, recognizing that there is a definite need for legal protection.

In 2011, we continue to present the testimony and ask that you acknowledge the urgency of this bill by insuring its passage this year. As a mother, I continue to support my son hoping that the State of Connecticut will provide the legal protections for his well-being that he deserves. As a retired teacher, I feel that this Act Concerning Discrimination will go a long way to help define the parameters of our Anti-Bullying efforts and be an important component of our education initiatives that teach tolerance, build respect, and recognize the diversity of all. As a citizen, I will be proud to know that the State of CT has joined the 13 other states and Washington, DC to prohibit discrimination on the basis of gender identity and expression. Thank you in advance for your efforts regarding this important legislation.

Sincerely,



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