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Senator Crisco, Representative Megna, and members of the committee,

My name is Mae Ehrnfelt and I am the LGBT+ Caucus Chair of the College Democrats of Connecticut (CDCT) as well as a junior attending Eastern Connecticut State University.

I am writing on behalf of the CDCT LGBT+ Caucus to testify against the proposed H.B. No. 5193, An Act Concerning Health Insurance Coverage for Gender Reassignment Surgery. If passed, this bill could restrict Connecticut health insurance policies from providing coverage for gender reassignment surgery or related surgical expenses.

The procedure for individuals who decide to undergo gender reassignment surgery is already difficult without the possible restrictions of this bill. For example, in order for gender reassignment surgery to be considered, Aetna requires the individual to present letters of referral from qualified mental health professionals; the individual must experience persistent, well-documented gender dysphoria; and in some cases, twelve months of hormone therapy and twelve months of living in the gender role that the individual identifies with is necessary before the surgery.¹ If H.B. No. 5193 were passed, and insurance companies were not required to provide coverage for gender reassignment surgery, the lives of transgender individuals here in the Constitution State would be detrimentally affected.

Transgender folks, especially transgender women of color, experience violence disproportionately in the United States. A 2012 study found that 53.8% of anti-LGBT+ homicide victims were transgender women.² Out of the vast LGBT+ community, transgender folks experience the most violence and the least public acceptance about their identity. If this bill were to pass, it would be a step back not only for the LGBT+ community, but for the entire state of Connecticut.

Connecticut has proven to be a leader for other states in terms of LGBT+ rights. Same-sex couples have the right to marry; gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender individuals are protected under anti-discrimination laws; and students have the right to form Gay/Straight Alliances in their schools to provide safe spaces for LGBT+ youth.³ If this bill is rejected, Connecticut will be one step closer to providing every individual in the state with the safety and acceptance that they deserve.

Sincerely,
Mae Ehrnfelt

¹ http://www.aetna.com/cpb/medical/data/600_699/0615.html

² http://www.avp.org/storage/documents/2012_mr_ncavp_hvreport.pdf

³ <http://www.glad.org/rights/connecticut>