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

I am writing to urge you to vote against HB 5193, which would eliminate the need for health insurers in Connecticut to pay for treatment related to an individual's gender transition. I am a licensed clinical psychologist in private practice for over thirty years and am on the clinical faculty in the Department of Psychology at Yale University. For the past fourteen years, I have worked with transgender individuals and their families, including children whom I have followed for many years.

I have come to know the depth of despair and hopelessness experienced by people whose physical body does not match their gender identity. For some children, hormone therapy has provided hope. Prior to this hope, many of these children feel isolated, anxious, confused, and depressed. For older individuals, surgery for the purpose of sex-reassignment is medically necessary for their well-being. Research has shown that transgender individuals are at a higher risk for suicide if they do not receive mental health support and/or medical interventions. A decision to relieve insurance companies of their responsibility to provide treatment will have devastating results.

I could comment on many aspects of the challenges that individuals face. Because I treat children, I would like to comment on the parents who are grappling with understanding and supporting their gender variant children. At first, parents are terrified that their child is faced with this devastating dilemma, the discordance between their physical body and their internal psychological sense of their gender. It is a very difficult process, not only for the transgender individual, but also for those folks who love them to face and negotiate these challenges. Connecticut's decision to require insurers to cover the necessary services these families need is a step forward. It shall not be reversed.

Sincerely,

*Nancy Meyer-Lustman, Ph.D.*

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