To the distinguished members of the Public Health Committee:

My name is Susan D. Boulware, M.D. and I am an Assistant Clinical Professor of Pediatrics at Yale University School of Medicine. I am a pediatric endocrinologist with over 25 years of clinical experience, cofounder and Medical Director of the Yale Gender Program and a member of WPATH (World Professional Association of Transgender Health).

I am writing to express my strong support for H.B. 6695, An Act Concerning The Protection of Youth from Conversion Therapy. The proposed bill is of fundamental importance to prohibit “conversion therapy”, a purposefully misleading label for a thoroughly discredited practice aimed at attempting to change a child’s sexual orientation.

Children and adolescents who identify as part of a gender and sexual minority (ie. gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, gender non-conforming) experience significant psychological and physical abuse from not only strangers, but also from friends, acquaintances, teachers and administrators in school as well as religious educators and clergy in their churches, synagogues and mosques. In the most concerning cases, these children experience abuse and rejection by their families.

The rejection and shaming that these children experience leads to internalized homophobia/transphobia, self-loathing and very high rates of anxiety and depression including suicidal ideation and high rates of suicide attempts.

We know that LGBTQ youth who have strong family support, acceptance and a generally affirming living environment have rates of depression and suicide that are no different from the general age-matched population. Studies have shown that “conversion therapy” is ineffective in the goal to change the sexual orientation of participants and of more concern is that patients of such programs had worsening of their often, fragile psychological state.

“Conversion therapy” programs have caused great harm to thousands of people. These programs have been condemned/delegitimized by The American Academy of Pediatrics, American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, American Psychological Association as well as multiple other organizations (see attached).
To date, five states (CA, IL, NJ, OR, VT) and The District of Columbia have passed similar legislation to protect youth from these harmful practices. I feel strongly that we in Connecticut must continue to lead the country in the protection of our most vulnerable citizens, which clearly includes sexual and gender minority children.

Unfortunately, I was not able to clear my schedule to personally attend the hearing today. I would be happy to discuss this matter by phone if I can offer any further clarity on this important matter.

I sincerely urge the committee to pass H.B. 6695 to ensure that children in Connecticut are never again lawfully subjected to these discredited and harmful practices.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

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The interdisciplinary team of specialists (named below) who work with gender non-conforming children in the Yale Gender Program firmly agree with the above statement and strongly urge you to pass H.B. 6695 for the protection of gender and sexual minority youth in Connecticut.

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Child and Adolescent Clinical Psychologist
Assistant Professor of Psychiatry
Yale University School of Medicine

Alice Rosenthal, JD
Staff Attorney, Medical-Legal Partnership Project
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