



March 21, 2019

Chairwoman Moore, Ranking Member Logan, Chairwoman Abercrombie, Ranking Member Case and distinguished members of the Human Services Committee:

My name is Patrick J Dunn, Executive Director of the New Haven Pride Center, I'm here to testify in support of *HB 7359: An Act Concerning a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Health and Human Services Network*. If passed, this bill will offer a seat at the table to LGBTQIP2sAA nutmeggers who have often been an invisible minority group when it comes to policy and funding decision making in our great state.

The New Haven Pride Center (Center) is located in downtown New Haven and has been in operations for nearly 25 years. We are a community space, a resource center, a hub of arts, culture, and humanities programming, and a fierce advocate for Greater New Haven's and Connecticut's LGBTQIP2sAA community.

In our 25 years we have seen many changes in our State and nation. At our founding in 1996, an HIV/AIDS diagnosis was still a death sentence where now there are countless options that can stop an infection before it begins. In our tenure, we have seen incredible policies made in our state including marriage equality, protections for our Transgender, Intersex and Nonbinary communities, and the banning of Conversation Therapy. We have also seen some of the worst statistics of hate crimes, annual reports of "this year was the largest number of transgender murders in US history," and watched as the highest courts and most powerful political figures debate our rights to work, our access to healthcare, and our very existence.

Last year, the Center hosted a Drag Queen Story Hour program at one of the Branches of the New Haven Free Public Library. Despite the threats of violence and protest against the speaker and participants, we moved forward with the program and connected with an incredible group of families and youth who were desperately looking for resources. At that event, I met many young people including one young nobinary kid who had been on a journey to understanding who they were alone, with nothing but online resources to help them and their parents. Had we not had that program I may never have met them, and they may never have found their community. Following the event, I connected them with several programs in the Greater New Haven area that they were unaware of, including the Center's youth-centric activities. I'm proud to say, they are as happy as any kid their age should be, because they found their community.

This is why organizations like the New Haven Pride Center exist. Unlike other minority groups, the LGBTQIP2sAA community is born into families that don't share our minority traits (most of the time), and even the best, most supportive parents and families don't always know where to find the support and resources their child needs. The New Haven Pride Center is proud to be one of the only operating non-profit agencies that service the LGBTQIP2sAA community in Connecticut. This puts us on the front lines, working hand in hand with community organizers, our clients, and those in need to find solutions, create safe spaces, and provide programming and services.

HB 7359 is an amazing opportunity for our State to invest in the LGBTQIP2sAA community of Connecticut and in organizations like mine who are working to meet the needs of the community. The work this network will do, particularly the needs assessment study, will give our entire community tools to elevate our conversations, expand our programmatic offerings, and make advancements that will close the gap for the most vulnerable members of our community. Thank you for allowing me to testify today, and for all the work you have and will do to make our Great State a better and safer place to live.

Thank you,

Patrick J Dunn  
Executive Director, New Haven Pride Center