

Testimony in support of:

HB 7359 AN ACT CONCERNING A LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER AND QUEER HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES NETWORK

Submitted by: Steven Feldman 39 Buckland Dear Senator Moore, Representative Abercrombie and distinguished members of the Human Services Committee,

My name is Steven Feldman and I live in Manchester, CT and work at the University of Connecticut's Rainbow Center in Storrs, CT. **I am pleased to be writing in support of HB 7359: An Act Concerning a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Health and Human Services Network.** Thank you for giving this bill a hearing. I strongly support HB 7359, which will form a committee to make recommendations to the state regarding the healthcare and human services for LGBTQ+ people in Connecticut.

I am the Graduate Assistant for the Rainbow Center, one of the centers listed as a member of the proposed network in this bill. I have worked at the University of Connecticut's Rainbow Center for almost one full school year, and I have had several experiences where students, faculty, and staff shared difficulties accessing adequate healthcare or human services. A network like that which is proposed in this bill would help to address these needs.

At this point, similar networks exist in New York and California, and Connecticut has a unique opportunity to join these states with these groundbreaking initiatives. We know that health disparities among different populations in the LGBTQ community face different barriers and forms of discrimination. For example, "despite extensive advocacy efforts, trans youth are subjected to bullying and harassment in the classroom; diagnosed with nonexistent learning disabilities and psychological problems; and generally misunderstood by their doctors, teachers, and classmates. As a result, these students get lower grades than their classmates and are less likely to pursue higher education."¹ In addition, bullying and harassment are twice as detrimental to transgender students' GPAs than their lesbian, gay, and bisexual peers as a

¹ Glavinic, T. (2010). Research Shows Lack of Support for Transgender and Gender-Nonconforming Youth in U.S. School Systems. *Inquiries Journal*, 2(01). Retrieved from <http://www.inquiriesjournal.com/articles/135/research-shows-lack-of-support-for-transgender-and-gender-nonconforming-youth-in-us-school-systems>

result of heightened in-school victimization.² It is important to have a network like this dedicated to learning and communicating these discrepancies, which may not be immediately understood by health and human services providers. This network, as it is proposed, integrates a great many voices and perspectives, which is critical to the success of the work.

² Ibid.

I know stories where adult students had their identities released to their parents unnecessarily, where mental health care providers made assumptions about students' needs based on their identities, and where students seeking mental health treatment were denied access because the one professional trained to work with transgender students could not accept any more clients. Often, if a student encounters a concern on campus, I can work with them to address and remedy the scenario. This network would provide us, and many service providers across the state, the opportunity to address concerns throughout the state.

By endorsing this network, Connecticut will send a clear message to its LGBTQ+ citizens that their experiences matter. Additionally, by providing an opportunity for these resource centers, service providers, and other designees to gather and discuss the Connecticut state of affairs, you will open the door for groundbreaking accomplishments in the area of inclusive health and human services provisions. I ask that you please take this opportunity to support the LGBTQ community through your support for this bill.

Thank you for your time,

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