

Dear Members of the Human Services Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly,

My name is Anastasia Martineau and I am a junior at the University of Connecticut, as well as student staff at the UConn Rainbow Center. I stand in support of *H.B. 7359, An Act Concerning a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Health and Human Services Network*.

I started working at the Rainbow Center at the beginning of this academic year, but this was not the beginning of my involvement. My sophomore year I became involved in the FAMILLEE program at the Rainbow Center, a mentoring program for first year and transfer students. I was able to see from my own mentee as well as the other students that participated just how important it is for LGBTQ+ students to have access to affirming healthcare and human services, whether that be for their mental or physical needs. Now more than ever, students *have* to feel supported, not only by our center, but by the state of Connecticut as a unified force.

As I began to work at the Rainbow Center, I would quickly learn just how much we do to provide for LGBTQ+ young people. From our FAMILLEE program, to weekly Out to Lunch Lectures, to providing rapid HIV/HepC testing, to our Husky Ally Safe Zone Trainings, we truly do as much as we can to educate, support, and advocate for students in the Storrs community. However, students do not spend every part of the year at school, and most go home to other towns in Connecticut where they may not have a resource like the Rainbow Center to create a safe space. This is just one aspect in which having a statewide network as outlined in this bill would be helpful. If we at the Rainbow Center could provide a wider range of information about health and human service providers from across Connecticut while students are in school, they would be better equipped to find care no matter where they go home to. With this bill, students will also be able to benefit from better LGBTQ+ friendly policy practices in the state that can extend past what we are able to provide as a single university.

As someone who not only works in this area, but also grew up here as an LGBTQ+ youth myself, I can tell you that the need for better data on our communities (and in some cases, any data), representation in public policy, and connectivity to the rest of the state is central to ensuring a safer and healthier environment for those in the LGBTQ+ community. The UConn Rainbow Center stands as an essential voice in this, and we fully endorse the creation of this network, not only for the northeast corner of Connecticut, but for the voices of students everywhere.

On behalf of the UConn Rainbow Center, I strongly support *H.B. 7359, An Act Concerning a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Health and Human Services Network*, and hope that the Committee and Connecticut lawmakers will vote favorably to create this network and continue to work to improve the lives of those of us in the Connecticut LGBTQ+ community.

Thank you for your time,
Annastasia Martineau
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