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National Association of Social Workers / Connecticut Chapter

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Testimony on Raised House Bill No. 7359:
AN ACT CONCERNING A LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER
AND QUEER HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES NETWORK.

Human Services Committee
March 2019

Submitted by: NASW/CT Diversity Committee

Honorable Senator Moore, Representative Abercrombie and the Human Services Committee,

The National Association of Social Workers CT Chapter Diversity Committee is in support of an LGBTQ Health and Human Services Network, Raised Bill No. 7359.

The National Association of Social Workers - Connecticut Chapter, Board of Directors has recently commissioned the Diversity Committee to support diversity through social work and development; to advance professional standards and improve services related to awareness of diversity, equity and oppression; and to promote social justice through public policy and action. The Diversity Committee is comprised of social workers at the MSW, DSW and PhD levels who are dedicated to the profession, clients, social justice and the NASW Code of Ethics. Committee members support legislation which addresses the needs of underserved populations. Therefore, please accept this submission of testimony in consideration of Raised Bill No. 7359.

Many LGBTQ individuals and families of LGBTQ youth have difficulty finding health care providers that understand their unique health needs. Some providers may be LGBTQ-friendly but not fully knowledgeable of the specific needs of LGBTQ patients (Jann *et al.*, "Important Considerations for Addressing LGBT Health Care Competency," *Am J Public Health*, 2015). Moreover, access to culturally competent, comprehensive, and inclusive health care is a scarcity for members of the LGBTQ community, particularly those who are economically disadvantaged, have limited insurance coverage, are not fluent in English, rely on public transportation, and/or need services in fully accessible buildings

Therefore, establishing legislation that contains specific language instating a Human Service Network to "make recommendations...build a safer and healthier environment...conduct a needs analysis" is critically needed. The language proposed in Section 1(a) and Section 1(b) are of utmost importance to better serve the growing population of LGBTQ constituents. Indeed, the population of LGBTQ adults has risen nationwide from 3.5% in 2012 to 4.5% in 2017 (Gallup,

2018). Hartford, Connecticut, ranked 10th in the nation in 2015 for its LGBTQ adult population percentage of 4.6% (Hartford Courant, 2015). Establishing a LGBTQ Health and Human Services Network comprised of organizational leaders that are committed to advancing the rights and equity of gender and sexual minorities is key to addressing these gaps in healthcare and social services for the LGBTQ community.

Due to the pressing need to more appropriately serve the LGBTQ community, the Diversity Committee respectfully requests your support for this bill which establishes an LGBTQ Health and Human Services Network to make recommendations to the state legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government concerning the delivery of health and human services to LGBTQ persons in the state. Passage of this bill will help build a safer and healthier environment for LGBTQ people and their families in Connecticut.

Respectfully,

NASW/CT Diversity Committee

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