



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

I'm here to testify in strong support of HB 7359, *An Act Concerning a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Health and Human Services Network*. If passed, the bill will ensure that the LGBTQ community can have a seat at the table in important policy discussions, identifying needs within our state, and ensuring deliverability of services.

Triangle Community Center (TCC) is Fairfield County's LGBTQ community center. We offer a case management program, trainings, over two dozen group meetings, and counseling. In short, we hear what's going on every day in the LGBTQ community. We know what our community needs: those needs are startling. 23% of Connecticut's homeless youth population is LGBTQ<sup>1</sup>, even though the community represents about 4% of the state's population.<sup>2</sup> LGBTQ people struggle with mental health issues in greater numbers than their peers due to stresses like discrimination and societal stigma. 22% of Connecticut's LGBTQ population reported being food insecure, and a similar share of the same population reported having annual incomes of less than \$24,000.<sup>3</sup> In Connecticut in 2017, according to FBI data, 15% of all hate crimes victimized LGBTQ people.<sup>4</sup> It is a challenge, too, to find a care provider in the medical field who will understand your identity and lived experience if you are LGBTQ. TCC's services do something about it. Recently we housed someone who spent years living in their car. Every day we help people: from Bridgeport where a majority of our clients are trans people of color fighting discrimination in jobs and housing, to seniors in Norwalk looking to break free from cycles of isolation, to helping a young adult from Stamford who just needs a square meal but can't afford one.

At a time like this, state governments should stand up. HB 7359 does that. This work has been done in sister states including in our neighboring New York. You have, time and again, tried to do the right thing by our community. You passed employment protections for LGBTQ people. You helped pass marriage equality and banned discrimination against LGBTQ people. You also recently banned the abusive practice of conversion therapy on youth. While those laws represent a positive change in our core values, those laws only touch a part of the everyday lives in the LGBTQ community. We need your help now: getting access to housing, nutritional assistance, finding good services, and building trust between us and local government. TCC is proud of the work it currently does on these matters, but our services do not exist outside of Fairfield County. Connecticut's LGBTQ community needs you.

There are times when we realize that some people need more help than others. By empowering the LGBTQ community to have direct access to policy makers in our state, you will help to ensure that everyone gets to share in Connecticut's promise. The LGBTQ community is eager for a government that will listen to its needs.

Thank you,

Conor Pfeifer  
Triangle Community Center

<sup>1</sup> Connecticut Counts, Annual Point-In-Time Count and Youth Count! (May 2018). Hartford, CT: Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness.

<sup>2</sup> LGBT Demographic Data Interactive. (January 2019). Los Angeles, CA: the Williams Institute: UCLA School of Law.

<sup>3</sup> See above.

<sup>4</sup> Hate Crimes in CT: A Town-By-Town Look at Reports. (November 2018). Patch.com.