

## Testimony of Anne Stanback

March 21, 2019

### In Support of H.B. 7359

*An Act Concerning a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Health and Human Services Network*

Dear Members of Human Services Committee:

My name is Anne Stanback, and I live in Avon, Connecticut. I write in support of H.B. 7359: *An Act Concerning a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Health and Human Services Network*.

Over the past 34 years, I have been actively involved in the two largest statewide LGBTQ grassroots efforts in Connecticut. The first resulted in the passage of the "Gay Rights law" in 1991 that for the first time protected gay, lesbian and bisexual people from discrimination in key areas of life; the second resulted in the freedom for same-sex couples to marry in 2008 and the ability to access the very real legal and financial benefits that are granted to couples who marry.

Much has changed in the 34 years since I first got involved in organizing around these issues. In the early days I received death threats, and today I feel genuine acceptance and support in every aspect of my life. But sadly, I am not the norm.

In four key indicators of economic wellbeing, LGBT individuals in Connecticut fare less well than non-LGBT individuals, according to The Williams Institute, the LGBT public policy institute based at the UCLA School of Law:

- **Unemployed:** 9% of LGBT people compared to 5% of non-LGBT
- **Uninsured:** 14% of LGBT people compared to 12% of non-LGBT
- **Food insecurity:** 27% of LGBT people compared with 15% of non-LGBT
- **Income less than \$24,000:** 25% of LGBT people compared with 18% of non-LGBT

There are a variety of reasons for these inequities, not the least of which is that Connecticut state law did not protect against discrimination in employment, housing, credit and other areas until 1991 for lesbian, gay and bisexual individuals and 2011 for transgender individuals, nor did state law allow same-sex couples to legally marry until 2008. (And of course homosexuality was criminalized in Connecticut until 1969 when sodomy statutes were repealed.)

But an equally significant reason for these inequities results from the fact that the LGBTQ community has been virtually ignored by state government in terms of a constituency in need of health and human service attention.

Because of the history of discrimination and societal scorn and disapproval, LGBTQ people have not come out and/or not sought assistance because of fear

of negative treatment. Given this reality, our community has worked hard to care for each other, and important community institutions have developed to provide key services as a result. But these organizations are continually underfunded and understaffed and not able to adequately serve those with the most significant needs.

H.B. 7359 creates a first of its kind vehicle in Connecticut with the goal of building a healthier and safer environment for the LGBTQ community. By providing for a community needs assessment, assembling a group of experts to make recommendations to state officials, and allocating dollars to support the mission of the Network, Connecticut can begin to address needs that have been ignored for far too long.

I urge legislators to remember that while changing laws to allow same-sex couples to marry or to prohibit licensed providers from using conversion therapy on transgender teens are relatively straightforward things to do, meeting the health and human service needs of the most vulnerable in any community is far more challenging. Entrenched issues like poverty, mental illness, addiction, unemployment/underemployment, food insecurity, and homelessness are long-term problems that need long-term solutions.

The creation of a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Health and Human Services Network is an important step in addressing these critical needs. Please support passage of H.B. 7359.

Thank you,  
Anne Stanback