



March 20, 2019

To Whom It May Concern:

I write with my strong support and interest in the creation of a network that will link stakeholders invested in LGBTQ health. I am a faculty member at the University of Connecticut in the Human Development and Family Sciences department. I have been awarded funding from multiple agencies (totaling over a million dollars) to study the experiences and health of LGBTQ+ populations and have published more than three dozen peer-reviewed manuscripts. It is through this research and empirical evidence that I implore the Committee of Human Services to consider creating a network of stakeholders that are invested in LGBTQ health.

All of my research over the past 10 years has found LGBTQ young folks to be at risk for health problems, such as depression, suicidality, substance use, and eating disorders. Most alarmingly, in my recently published research, I have found that substance use behaviors, depression, school safety, and disordered eating are actually *getting worse* for LGBTQ youth.

Despite the narrative of “things are getting better” and a post-marriage equality society, life is not getting easier for the youth I have worked with. Last year I finished collecting the largest contemporary sample of LGBTQ youth (17,112) from across the US. Our initial findings, published in top health journals, find extreme health disparities across all outcomes we have tested.

It my sincerest hope that Connecticut can continue to lead the nation in its awareness and action regarding LGBTQ health problems, and to continue doing this, I ask that further work around embraced.

Sincerely,

Ryan Watson, PhD

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ryan Watson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Faculty at UConn

College of Liberal Arts and Sciences  
**Human Development and Family Studies**  
348 MANSFIELD ROAD, UNIT 1058  
STORRS, CT 06269-1058  
PHONE 860.486.4049  
FAX 860.486.3452  
familystudies.uconn.edu