

March 19, 2021

TESTIMONY SUPPORTING HB-5654: AN ACT CONCERNING THE UPDATING OF STATE FORMS, APPLICATIONS AND METHODS OF IDENTIFICATION TO INCLUDE A NONBINARY GENDER OPTION.

Dear Honorable Chairpersons Flexer and Fox, Ranking Members Sampson and Mastrofrancesco, Vice Chairs Haskell and Thomas, and all other Members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Kathleen Callahan, a resident of Stratford, and the Community Programming and Development Lead at the Connecticut Women's Consortium in Hamden. I am also the chair of the National Association of Social Workers Connecticut Chapter's Education and Legislative Action Network. I am here to voice my strong support for *HB-5654: An Act Concerning the Updating of State Forms, Applications and Methods of Identification to Include a Nonbinary Gender Option*.

Using advocacy, training, and education tools, The Consortium strives toward a behavioral health system which responds to the needs of women, LGBTQ individuals, and people of color, as well as the people and organizations that affect them. We promote equity and inclusivity throughout our work and recognize sex and gender or not the same, gender is not binary, and an individual's gender identity is fundamental to their self-determination, dignity, and humanity.

The Consortium collaborated with the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) and providers on the Trauma and Gender Initiative for close to fifteen years. Grounded in organizational culture change, this initiative promotes best practices in trauma-responsive behavioral health care by providing training, consultation, and technical assistance to agencies across the state. In 2019, we modified the TAG fidelity scale used to gauge the extent to which a program or agency has developed a culture of trauma-informed, gender-responsive care, changing from a binary view of gender to a gender-inclusive spectrum.

The Movement Advancement Project has provided interactive equality map visualizations showing the many states that allow gender markers on documents beyond sex-based "F(emale)" and "M(ale)," including driver's licenses and birth certificates. They explain "accurate and consistent gender markers on identity documents helps transgender people gain access to public spaces and resources, as well as dramatically reducing the risk they will face violence, discrimination, or harassment."<sup>1</sup>

Gender policy is evolving and uncertain across the country and this bill will face opposition and challenges, philosophically and logistically. We have faith in Connecticut policy makers and data system designers and urge you to lead us forward. Pursuing "liberty and justice for all" is not an easy endeavor yet it is what we consistently strive toward. Every individual deserves the affirmation of accurate identifying documents, the human right of being who they are.

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<sup>1</sup> Movement Advancement Project. (n.d.) Equality Maps: Identity Document Laws and Policies. Retrieved from <https://www.lgbtmap.org/equality-maps/identity-document-laws>.

 **The Connecticut Women's Consortium**  
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In closing, I urge you to vote in favor of *HB-5654* and require all state agency forms, applications and methods of identification to be updated with a nonbinary gender option.

With respect and gratitude for your service and consideration,

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