



NASW

National Association of Social Workers / Connecticut Chapter

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

Government Administration and Elections Committee

March 19, 2021

Presented By: Kathleen Callahan, MSW

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 (NASW/CT ELAN). I am testifying on behalf of the chapter which represents over 2,300 members. We call upon the Government Administration and Elections Committee to support *HB-5654: An Act Concerning the Updating of State Forms, Applications and Methods Of Identification to Include a Nonbinary Gender Option*.

The legislative agenda of NASW/CT emphasizes advancing racial, economic, and social justice and culturally responsive practices in all aspects of community life and specifically promotes LGBTQIA rights. We recognize sex and gender are not the same, gender is not binary, and an individual's gender identity is fundamental to their self-determination, dignity, and humanity.

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."¹

¹ Movement Advancement Project. (n.d.) Equality Maps: Identity Document Laws and Policies. Retrieved from https://www.lgbtmap.org/equality-maps/identity_document_laws.

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.

In closing, NASW-CT urges the committee 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.