

Government Administration and Elections Committee

Public Testimony of the CT Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF)

H.B. 5654: *An Act Concerning the Updating of State Forms, Applications and Methods of Identification to Include a Nonbinary Gender Option*

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The Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF) is a statewide, nonprofit organization that advocates for and empowers women and girls in Connecticut, especially those who are underserved and marginalized. For forty-seven years, CWEALF has been a leading advocate in the development of policy solutions that advance women's economic security, combat discrimination, and increase gender equity in Connecticut.

CWEALF supports H.B. 5654: *An Act Concerning the Updating of State Forms, Applications and Methods of Identification to Include a Nonbinary Gender Option*.

We believe in achieving equity and inclusion in all spaces. By passing H.B. 5654, nonbinary individuals can be affirmed, recognized, and included in areas where they are currently minimized. Nonbinary individuals deserve the ability to accurately identify on state forms, applications and methods of identification. While gender-based discrimination persists in our society, ensuring nonbinary individuals' identities are accurately reflected in state documents is an important and positive step in dismantling gender-based discrimination and violence in our state.

We must prioritize the well-being of our state's residents. Research shows that possessing identity documents that accurately reflect one's gender identity is associated with improved mental health and a reduction in suicidal ideation and suicide attempts.¹ State forms, applications, and methods of identification are outdated and must be amended to promote gender equity in our state.

As we work to improve diversity, equity, and inclusion in our state, we must start by affording constituents their right to be identified and recognized by their gender identity. CWEALF urges the Committee to vote favorably on House Bill No. 5654 to continue Connecticut as a leader in gender equity by eliminating barriers and honoring the identities of Connecticut residents.

¹Scheim, A. I., Perez-Brumer, A. G., & Bauer, G. R. (2020). Gender-concordant identity documents and mental health among transgender adults in the USA: a cross-sectional study. *The Lancet Public Health*, 5(4), e196-e203.