

My name is Heather Page, I am from Bethel, CT and I am submitting written testimony in strong support of H.B. 7135, an Act Concerning The Provision of Reproductive and Gender-Affirming Health Care Services to Patients. This legislation will ensure our state continues to do everything in its power to protect Connecticut's healthcare providers, and access to essential reproductive health care services, including abortion, as well as prescribed health care accessed by transgender people and their families.

As the mother of a ten-year-old trans child who consistently expressed their gender identity from 18 months on, I fully believe access to gender affirming care is a) necessary and b) will allow my daughter (and others like her) to grow into a physically, mentally, and socially healthy and productive adult(s). Studies show that receiving this care proactively decreases suicidality and mental health crises. Society benefits when young people don't want to kill themselves, but instead hold hope for a productive future. In addition, the effects of receiving this care benefit society as a whole as it will consume less resources now vs treating the consequences of not receiving the necessary care in the first place. THERE IS MORE RISK AND CONSUMPTION OF RESOURCES WITH **NOT** TREATING THAN TREATING. To redeem these benefits, we must have systems and protections in place to shield those that are offering the care so we can ensure a) it is safe, and b) ensure it is accessible.

Efforts to restrict or criminalize medically necessary care for transgender young people aim to prevent families of transgender young people from working with doctors to ensure their child gets the care they need. The threat of litigation is very real considering the direction of the federal government and the inflammatory narrative put out by the media to influence those that have no experience with trans people. As someone who has had direct experience with trans youth for the past ten years, has participated in multiple support groups, conferences, workshops, trainings, and who has worked in a healthcare setting for the past 9 years, I can attest to the very real needs and demands of the trans youth population. **Connecticut can position itself as a leader to meet this demand, as well as set the example for the rest of the nation to do the ethical thing by protecting those that serve to meet this demand.** Someone's ability to get the care they need and to define their own path should never depend on where they live.

We know that lawmakers that oppose abortion and health care for transgender people will continue attempting to end all access to this critical health care – not just in ban states, but nationwide – through government overreach and hostile enforcement actions. Strengthening Connecticut's shield protections and ensuring the state continues to do everything in its power to protect its providers, these protections will seek to mitigate risks to licensed providers in our state. I strongly urge the Judiciary Committee and CT General

Assembly to support H.B. 7135. By strengthening Connecticut's Reproductive Freedom Defense Act and our state's shield protections with these added provisions for telehealth providers, Connecticut will be able to offer a critical layer of defense for its dedicated and compassionate reproductive health care workforce seeking to respond to the national public health emergency that is our post-*Roe* reality.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this important bill.

Sincerely,

Heather Page

Bethel, CT

VP, HR Nuvance Health