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**Testimony of
The Permanent Commission on the Status of Women
Before the
Judiciary Committee
March 21, 2011**

Re: H.B. 6599, AAC Discrimination

Senators Coleman and Kissel, Representative Fox and Hetherington, and members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW) in response to the introduction of H.B. 6599, which would prohibit discrimination on the basis of gender identity and expression.

Individuals are often harassed or discriminated against in several arenas, such as employment, education, housing, public accommodations and credit matters, because of the stereotypical belief about how men and women should act. While there is a Commission on Human Rights (CHRO) ruling¹ that prohibits discrimination against transgender people under the sex discrimination laws, there is no clear statutory protection. This bill would provide such protection.

We oppose, as we are sure that you do as well, all forms of discrimination. Discriminatory acts against transgender individuals are about gender and social expectations about gender. One's gender identity and expression is a personal and private matter. No one should lose a job or be denied entry into school because of the prejudices of others. By including gender identity and expression in Connecticut's anti-discrimination laws, the Legislature reaffirms the principle that people in our state may work and live without fear of discrimination, and reminds those who commit illegal acts out of prejudice that our society deprecates their behavior and will not tolerate it.

We look forward to working with you to address this issue. Thank you for your consideration.

¹ *Declaratory Ruling on Behalf of John/Jane Doe.*