

Human Services Committee

Public Testimony of the Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF)
H.B. 7359: *An Act Concerning a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Health and Human Services Network*

Submitted by: Madeline Granato, Policy Manager
March 21, 2019

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 or marginalized. For forty-five years, CWEALF has led the development of policy solutions that enhance women's economic security and combat discrimination. Through information, education, referrals, and bilingual advocacy, CWEALF also works to ensure that all individuals in our state have access to legal justice.

CWEALF urges the Committee to support H.B. 7359: *An Act Concerning A Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Health and Human Services Network* to establish a health and human services network dedicated to the needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer persons in Connecticut.

CWEALF was proud to advocate years ago to implement marriage equality and expand Connecticut's anti-discrimination statutes to include gender identity and expression.

Though Connecticut has made progress to protect and advance the rights of the LGBTQ community, LGBTQ individuals in our state continue to experience economic insecurity at higher rates than non-LGBTQ individuals. According to The Williams Institute, 9% of LGBTQ people are unemployed compared to 5% of non-LGBTQ people. LGBTQ workers are also more likely to experience food insecurity (27% compared to 15%) and earn an income less than \$24,000 per year (25% compared to 18%).

LGBTQ individuals also experience higher rates of discrimination and hate crimes, especially in recent years. According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Southern Poverty Law Center, the prevalence of bias-related incidents against people of color, LGBTQ individuals and women have increased since 2016.

House Bill No. 7359 creates a necessary path forward to protect the health, safety, and economic security of Connecticut's LGBTQ community. We urge the Committee and Connecticut lawmakers to support H.B. 7359.