



## TESTIMONY OF GLBTQ LEGAL ADVOCATES & DEFENDERS IN SUPPORT OF S.B. 1 AND H.B. 5003

Dear Members of Labor and Public Employees Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly:

I am grateful for the opportunity to testify in support of S.B. 1: An Act Concerning Paid Family and Medical Leave and H.B. 5003: An Act Implementing a Paid Family and Medical Leave Program. My name is Patience Crozier, and I am a Senior Staff Attorney at GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders (“GLAD”). GLAD works in New England and nationally to create a just society free of discrimination based on gender identity and expression, HIV status, and sexual orientation through strategic litigation, public policy advocacy, and education. In my work at GLAD, I focus on youth and family issues. With regard to this legislation, I write in particular to support inclusive definitions of family members.

This legislation is important because it creates and implements a comprehensive, statewide system of paid family and medical leave for workers who need time to care for themselves or a loved one or to welcome a child. This legislation is of particular importance to the LGBTQ community that GLAD serves. In Connecticut, the LGBTQ community is substantial: 3.9% of people in Connecticut identify as LGBTQ, and, of those people, 20% are raising children.<sup>1</sup> Ensuring that workers are able to take paid leave to provide necessary care for themselves and their loved ones will provide crucial support for members of the LGBTQ community which, in Connecticut, face food insecurity at a higher rate than the non-LGBTQ population (22% versus 13%).<sup>2</sup> Nationally, research shows that LGBTQ people are more likely to live in poverty than their non-LGBTQ counterparts. M.V. Lee Badgett & Alyssa Schneebaum, The Impact of Wage Equality on Sexual Orientation Poverty Gaps, Williams Institute, 1 (June 2015), <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Impact-of-Wage-Equality-on-Sexual-Orientation-Poverty-Gaps-June-2015.pdf>. LGBTQ people of color and transgender people are especially vulnerable to living in poverty. *Id.*; James, S.E., Herman, J.L., Rankin, S., Keisling, M, Mottet, L., & Anafi, M., Executive Summary of the Report of the 2015 Transgender Survey, 3 (2016), <http://www.ustranssurvey.org/report>. For these individuals and families, taking time off of work without pay can mean risking their income and their employment and can

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<sup>1</sup> The Williams Institute of UCLA: <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/visualization/lgbt-stats/?topic=LGBT&area=9#density>

<sup>2</sup> The Williams Institute of UCLA at <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/visualization/lgbt-stats/?topic=LGBT&area=9#density>. Connecticut data also show that 22% of the LGBT population reports annual income under \$24,000 as opposed to 14% of the non-LGBT population of Connecticut.

undermine their economic stability. This legislation would promote the economic security and stability of all workers in Connecticut, including LGBTQ individuals and their loved ones.

GLAD, further, strongly supports inclusive definitions of family as vital to the LGBTQ community. The LGBTQ community and its families have historically lacked legal recognition or formalization under the law. Despite this, LGBTQ family relationships are critical to stability and well-being. In the United States today, family composition is increasingly diverse. “Public discussion about American families often assumes the nation is largely made up of married heterosexual couples raising their biological children. Yet less than a quarter of all U.S. households fall into this category. Today’s children may be raised by grandparents, single parents, stepparents, aunts, uncles or foster parents.” Movement Advancement Project, Family Equality Council and Center for American Progress, All Children Matter: How Legal and Social Inequalities Hurt LGBT Families, Executive Summary, 1 (2011), available at <http://www.lgbtmap.org/file/all-children-matter-summary.pdf>. Broadening definitions of family members protects LGBTQ families and ensures they benefit equally from protections such as paid family and medical leave.

At GLAD, I work on increasing protections for LGBTQ children and families. Recently I have been involved in legislative reform efforts to ensure that parentage laws are constitutional following the marriage equality decision of Obergefell v. Hodges, 135 S. Ct. 2584 (2015), and to protect the legal parent/child relationships of all children regardless of the circumstances of their birth. In 2018, I collaborated in efforts to pass the Vermont Parentage Act, and I helped ensure that Massachusetts updated its Voluntary Acknowledgment of Parentage form to include protections for LGBTQ families. For example, under the Vermont Parentage Act, which is modeled in part on the UPA of 2017, there are nine main paths to legal parentage for children: adoption, birth, presumption (including a marital and holding out presumption), acknowledgment, court adjudication, genetics, de facto parentage, assisted reproduction, and surrogacy. Families form in so many ways, and it is critical to protect all children and respect all families. This is why inclusive family definitions are so important. Family relationships are not restricted to biology, marriage, adoption and foster care. Rather, important family relationships also arise through non-marital partnerships, birth, assisted reproduction, gestational carrier agreements, legal guardianship, and conduct. It is critical that legislation such as this – that aims to promote the economic security of Connecticut workers and the economic vitality of this state – fully includes all workers by recognizing the reality of today’s diverse families and family structures.

In conclusion, GLAD believes that this legislation provides critical protections for Connecticut workers and families, and we hope that the legislation will have inclusive family definitions that reflect the true diversity of Connecticut families. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify, and thank you for your work to ensure Connecticut leads on this important economic justice issue.

Submitted with appreciation by:

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