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February 18, 2011

To: Committee on Housing and Workforce Development
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Suite 112
Washington, DC 20004

Attn: the Honorable Michael A. Brown, Councilmember, Chairperson for the Committee

Re: Allocation of Resources to Eliminate Employment Discrimination in Relation to the District of Columbia's Transgender Population

Dear Sir;

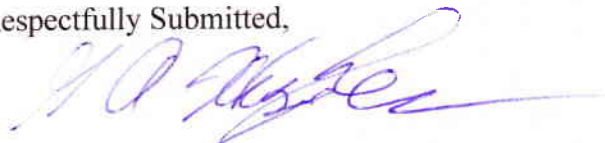
I am certain that you are aware that within the District of Columbia, transgender individuals are afforded legal protection against discrimination as specified in the Human Rights Act of 1977, amended on March 8, 2006 to include "gender identity and expression". The rights of those individuals are further detailed and explained in Title 4 Chapter 8 of the DCMR, Compliance Rules and Regulations Concerning Gender Identity and Expression, which was published and became effective on October 27, 2006.

The unfortunate reality is that discrimination cannot be eliminated solely by legislation. The discriminatory attitudes and practices that inspired the need for the legislation remain entrenched in all sectors, public and private. "Gender Identity and Expression" and the concept of "transgender" and/or "transsexual", remain as a matter of controversy in society at large. Likewise, although the medical and psychiatric professions have advanced regarding treatment through medical intervention, the cause of the condition remains a matter of scientific controversy. The majority of experts opine that the transgender condition begins in the pre-natal development of a fetus in the womb, that the resulting gender incongruity is completely involuntary, and serves as yet another example of nature's diversity. Transgender individuals really are different than the majority population that comprises society at large.

I believe that all will agree that those who are different - in any fashion - are exponentially more likely to be subjected to discrimination. The differences between the binary genders of male and female are universally appreciated and celebrated...and those who cross the boundaries of gender are more often than not scorned and rejected. The discrimination propagated against the entire lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community is considerable, but none is so evident and emotionally charged as the discrimination against those who exhibit traits in opposition to their birth gender - those who are transgender.

My testimony is presented to encourage your Committee, and others, that the District of Columbia has just cause and need, supported by both ethical and financial motives, to allocate resources and take proactive measures that will address the issue of transgender employment discrimination.

Respectfully Submitted,



Germaine Anna Hughes

Written Testimony of Germaine Anna Hughes:
Allocation of Funds to End Transgender Employment Discrimination

“Poverty is the worst form of violence.” - Gandhi

Transgender individuals have historically been denied the basic human rights afforded to others. Since the March 8, 2006 amendment to the Human Rights Act was implemented, the legality of that discrimination no longer exists. Unfortunately, legislation does not eliminate discrimination. Negative bias aimed at the transgender community is evident in District government, within District agencies, and throughout the District’s private sector. Discrimination remains a day to day fact in all facets of life for every transgender individual. Of all the discrimination faced by our community, employment discrimination is a particularly critical issue.

Here are some basic facts:

- The Office of GLBT Affairs (OGLBTA) has provided statistics that of the approximately twenty six thousand (26,000) individuals employed by District agencies, approximately six (6) employees were openly transgender. In the last ten years, ten transsexual women have been murdered in the District. More women have been murdered than are presently employed by District agencies. This clearly indicates persistent and systemic discrimination.
- There are no programs within the District government dealing specifically with transgender employment issues, or transgender employment discrimination.
- The Transgender Job Fairs held by the District did not result in a single individual obtaining employment, in spite of the fact that several District agencies participated.
- Unemployment, and under employment, remain critical factors in the lives of transgender individuals.
- A survey performed in the District estimated a 42% rate of unemployment in the transgender population, with 31% having an annual income below \$10,000.
- Those individuals most severely affected are transgender women of color.
- The Department of Employment Services (DOES) employs approximately 450 individuals, none of whom are openly transgender.
- While there are services aimed to assist and accommodate specific populations (youth, seniors, disabled, Spanish speaking) there are no services at the DOES specifically aimed at serving the transgender population.
- There is no specific contact person at the DOES where a transgender individual can be directed.
- There are no experts at the DOES familiar with the obstacles peculiar to transgender employment, and sensitive to the needs of the transgender population.

The District of Columbia allocates significant resources in response to transgender discrimination and unemployment. Social Service programs provide housing for those who are homeless. The Department of Corrections provides housing and sustenance for those resorting to the sex industry to pay for their own survival. The Courts, probation, and ex-offender programs also expend resources. The District expends additional funds on health resources relating to HIV treatment and prevention, exacerbated by “survival” prostitution. All of these expenditures share a common denominator - they could be significantly decreased if transgender persons were simply provided an equal opportunity to work and live with dignity. For these reasons, it is in the District’s best interest to seek and implement solutions.

On September 9, 2010, a meeting was held between senior staff representing the DOES and individuals representing the interest and welfare of the local transgender community. The meeting was initiated, at my request, by Christopher Dyer, who was serving as the Director of the Mayor’s Office of LGBT Affairs.

Those attending for the DOES included Director John Walsh, Deputy Director Lisa Mallory, Project Director for Project Empowerment Charles Jones, Associate Director for One-Stop Operations Ruby Washington, Associate Director with the Office of Employer Services Eric Scott, and Associate for the Office of Apprenticeship Louis Brown.

Representatives for the transgender community included Cyndee Clay, Executive Director for HIPS, Helping Individual Prostitutes Survive; Earline Budd, Treatment Adherence Specialist at Transgender Health Empowerment, and a seven year volunteer with DC Department of Corrections; Brian Watson, Director of Programs at Transgender Health Empowerment; Sadie Ryan Baker, an elected member of the DC Trans Coalition; and finally myself, Jeri Hughes, as a private citizen.

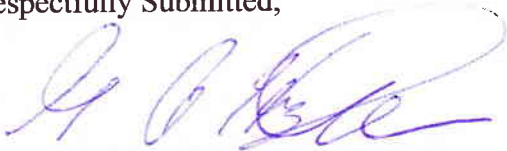
All present agreed that the transgender community faces significant discrimination and severe obstacles to employment opportunities. Several topics were discussed and considered including:

1. DOES would establish a Liaison to the transgender community.
2. The DOES should expand their staff to include a minimum of one expert on the issues of transgender discrimination. The individual(s) should be extremely sensitive to the needs of the transgender community, as well as extremely familiar with the organizations and key individuals that comprise the District's transgender community.
3. The DOES should implement an initiative to attract and serve the transgender community, to provide the training and services offered to all District residents, while simultaneously building alliances and contacts throughout the community with employers, public and private, that are committed to providing equal employment opportunities to those who are transgender.
4. DOES should take pro-active measures to ensure that the transgender community would represent a reasonable demographic in the population of 26,000 employed by District agencies and services.

Although a commitment was made to establish a DOES Liaison through Transgender Health Empowerment, and work towards the implementation of the other initiatives aimed at assisting the community, the DOES has failed to honor that commitment. Director Walsh has since left the employ of DOES, but others present at that meeting have remained. Commitments made by the Director of an agency should not be tossed aside solely because that individual no longer holds their position. The Director was not making a personal commitment - he was acting on behalf of the DOES. The failure of the DOES to implement the policies discussed exhibits bad faith, and in my opinion, poor judgment.

I urge you to take action to correct this disparity. The community wants to meet with the new director, Dr. Rochelle Webb, and move forward to see policies established that will address this important issue. Discrimination by definition is abhorrent, the DOES commitment should be honored, and it is in the financial interest of the District to utilize the skills and talents of all our citizens.

Respectfully Submitted,



Germaine Anna Hughes

Dated: February 18, 2011