

House Commerce Committee Testimony
HB 5804

My name is Julie Nemecek. I am a resident of Spring Arbor, Michigan. I am an ordained Baptist minister and I have faced significant discrimination for being transgender. I strongly urge the committee to include "gender identity" and "gender expression" language in any amendment to the Elliot Larsen Civil Rights Act.

In 2005 I shared my transgender diagnosis with the Michigan university where I worked. Even though this conservative Christian school taught the standards of care that I was following, I faced significant discrimination such that I felt compelled to file an EEOC complaint in 2006. The original complaint is included with this testimony and was later amended to include retaliatory acts committed by the university. In March 2007 I reached a mediated settlement with the university and ended an exemplary career with this institution.

I had led the university's entrance into online education, developed and led the accreditation for most of the university's graduate programs, was recognized for my outstanding teaching, and even delivered a commencement address. Despite this background and my educational qualifications, I was unable to find full-time employment even though I submitted over 300 applications over the next six years for positions for which I was eminently qualified. I did reach the final interview stage on numerous occasions, but was never offered a position even though a corporate head hunter said I gave the best interview he had ever heard.

My situation is not different from most transgender people. Collectively, transgender people are significantly under-employed or unemployed. We face discrimination in many ways including employment, health insurance, and healthcare, even though the American Medical

Association defines being transgender as a "serious medical condition" (2008 resolution of the AMA).

I encourage the committee to review the significant research on the discrimination transgender people face. A copy of this comprehensive study can be found at http://www.thetaskforce.org/static_html/downloads/reports/reports/ntds_full.pdf.

Please help end the pain being caused to individuals and families by discrimination against these citizens of Michigan. Thank you.

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