

SB 1044 LOBBYING GUIDE

This fact sheet is designed to help you organize your thoughts before you call your legislator. The first section, **some good places to start**, are good points that you can make when introducing the topic to your legislator. The second section, **common questions**, outlines responses to what your legislator is likely to ask you about the bill. The third section, **points to avoid**, are some of the more complex elements of the bill—these would be good questions to answer with “I don’t know, but I can have someone get in touch with you or I can get back to you later.” Many times we in the Anti-discrimination coalition need to defer to the legislative lawyers given the intricacies of legislation.

Take a look at the points we’ve outlined here, and think about how you can relate them to your own life. Your personal experiences are really important in showing law makers why SB 1044 is necessary, but try to keep the stories you tell relevant and brief. Don’t worry about repeating yourself, or saying “I don’t know.” It is better to repeat something or to say “I don’t know” than to make something up.

Read through this sheet *before* you call so you have a strong grasp on the materials when you’re talking to your state representative or their staff member. Be clear and concise. Your goal should be to leave the person you talk to with the main selling point of the bill: equal rights to employment, housing, and credit.

You can find your Connecticut Senator’s and Connecticut Representative’s phone number at <http://www.vote-smart.org>. When you call, tell them you want to talk about SB 1044, *An Act Concerning Discrimination*. You may end up talking to the staff member who is handling this bill. They don’t need to “get it” by the end of the conversation; they just need to vote in support of the bill.

It is important to end the conversation by asking your legislator if you can count on their vote in support of SB 1044, then call one of the people listed below and let us know what they said.

Some good places to start

- The bill updates Connecticut’s non-discrimination laws to ensure that they clearly and uniformly protect all people regardless of their gender identity or expression. SB 1044 defines gender identity or expression using the same language as Connecticut’s Hate Crimes legislation.
- Connecticut’s definition of hate crimes *already* protects gender identity or expression. The hate crimes legislation passed with a vote of 139-4 in the House and 33-0 in the Senate. All people in Connecticut deserve to have these protections applied consistently.
- Currently, 34% of the country’s population is protected from discrimination based on gender identity or expression. This includes California, Hawaii, Illinois, Maine, Minnesota, New Jersey, New Mexico, Rhode Island and Washington and over 80 localities.
- This change is important for all who are affected by it, both those who may be potential victims and those who can be held liable. Many small businesses do not

have the resources for prolonged legal battles; clearly stating employees' rights will help small business owners to avoid unnecessary expenses.

- SB 1044 clarifies and updates Connecticut's non-discrimination laws to ensure that they clearly and uniformly protect all people regardless of their gender identity or expression by simply adding the phrase "gender identity or expression", as defined in Connecticut's "Hate Crime law", to all statutes that address discrimination.

Common questions you might encounter

Why is this bill important and why should I support it?

Adding a clear and comprehensive clause to nondiscrimination legislation is essential to ensure that the law is well-understood. SB 1044 provides a necessary clarification to existing law, making it more comprehensive, clear, and understandable.

Who does this bill protect? Why do they need protection?

SB 1044 is written primarily to protect transgender, gender non-conforming and transsexual people. These groups often encounter discrimination when looking for jobs and at work when starting live as the "opposite sex." SB 1044 will help these populations find and keep employment.

Don't they already have protection?

In its' 2000 *Declaratory Ruling on Behalf of John/Jane Doe*, the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities decided that protections around "sex" extend to transgender people. The CHRO decision, however, leaves a lot of ambiguity in the law, and isn't something people might be aware of unless they have a legal background. SB 1044 clearly states gender identity or gender expression as protected categories

A few points to note

There are always items that are not relevant to this legislation or require a legal response and so it is quite appropriate to say "I don't know. I'll have someone get back to you about that."

- Bathrooms. This is not an area covered by SB 1044 and so is not relevant to your discussion with a legislator. If your legislator brings this up, politely tell them that it is not covered by SB 1044. We want to keep the focus on the legislative issues of discrimination in employment, credit, and housing.
- Access to medical treatment. Insurance coverage for medications and surgery is beyond the scope of SB 1044.

If you have any questions, or to tell us how your conversation went, please call Abbey Willis at the Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund, (860) 247-6090, or Jerimarie Liesegang at the Connecticut TransAdvocacy Coalition, (860) 983-8139 or email at jerimarie@transadvocacy.com.