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Good afternoon, I am Robert Zavoski, M.D., President-elect of the Connecticut Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics and a practicing general pediatrician here in Hartford. I have been asked to discuss the Academy's position on the adoption of children by parents of the same sex.

The American Academy of Pediatrics is committed to the attainment of optimal physical, mental and social health and well-being of all infants, children, adolescents and young adults. We have over 1000 Connecticut members who strive to meet these ideals.

In February, 2002, the Academy's Committee on Psychosocial Aspects of Child and Family Health released a policy statement entitled Co-Parent or Second-Parent Adoption by Same-Sex Parents. After a review of the available research into the medical and psychosocial effects of growing up in a family with parents of the same sex, the Committee found that:

Children who are born to or are adopted by one member of a same-sex couple deserve the security of two legally recognized parents. Therefore the American Academy of Pediatrics supports legislative and legal efforts to provide the possibility of adoption of the child by the second parent or co-parent of these families.

In addition, the Committee recommended that such legislation guarantee:

- The child's right of relationship with both parents
- The second parent's custody rights and responsibilities if the first parent were to die or become incapacitated.
- The second parent's rights of custody and visitation if the couple separates.
- The child's eligibility for health and other benefits from both parents.
- The ability of both parents to participate and consent in educational, health care and other important decisions on behalf of the child.
- The child's financial security in the event of the death of one of the parents through eligibility to all appropriate entitlements and survivors benefits.

Copies of the Committee's full statement and supporting technical report are attached.

As stated in the technical report, research into the long term outcomes of children growing up with gay or lesbian parents show no difference from those of children growing up in more 'traditional' families. Furthermore, the so-called negative effects of growing up with gay or lesbian parents are the same as those experienced by children of heterosexual parents who grow up in families where they experience divorce, parental discord, or experience social stigmas. It should be recognized that many of these studies are limited by small numbers of study subjects, varied and diverse family structures, and short-term follow up periods, all due largely to the social stigma still placed by society on homosexual lifestyles. Despite these minor limitations, the research that does exist is clear and conclusive: children who grow up in a family environment where they are loved, protected, and nurtured become far more stable and successful adults than do children who grow up without such benefits, regardless of the sexual orientation of their parents.

When released last spring, the Academy's co-parenting position statement engendered much controversy. The statement and the research behind it were extensively reviewed and vigorously debated in September at the Academy's annual meeting of its chapter officers from across the country. Although a few members expressed discomfort with some alternative parental lifestyles for religious and other reasons, the statement was overwhelmingly endorsed by the Academy's chapter leadership.

Connecticut Public Act 00-228, An Act Concerning the Best Interest of Children in Adoption Matters, includes many of the criteria recommended in the Academy of Pediatrics Co-parenting Statement. Unfortunately, many of the most important needs of children of same sex parents remain unmet, such as access to health insurance coverage and other benefits available only to married employees. The General Assembly may choose to address each deficiency individually as it is identified, a laborious and time consuming process. Alternatively, the General Assembly could enact the Academy's recommendation that legally recognizes civil unions, "assuring legal status equivalent to marriage for gay and lesbian partners" and providing "security and permanence for the children of those partnerships."

Not recognizing civil unions legally and financially discriminates against the children of gay and lesbian parents. Frankly, since it is the social stigma directed against gay and lesbian couples that research identifies as the greatest risk to their children, it is time that Connecticut ends this legalized discrimination and legally recognizes gay and lesbian families for what they are: families.

Thank you for your kind attention.