



CONNECTICUT CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

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Judiciary Committee Testimony

SB699: An Act Concerning Recognition of Foreign Contracts

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The Connecticut Catholic Conference is opposed to Senate Bill 699, An Act Concerning Recognition of Foreign Contracts. Currently, the State of Connecticut has a clear public policy that only recognizes marriages between members of the opposite sex. This policy is reflected clearly in Section 46b-38nn of our State Statutes, which defines marriage as the union of one man and one woman. Clarification of this policy is also presented in an Attorney General's opinion, dated September 20, 2005, to the Commissioner of Public Health. SB 699 conflicts with this policy, since it gives special recognition to same-sex marriages in other jurisdictions by automatically granting rights to these relationships under Connecticut State Law. Enactment of SB 699 may also directly impact current court proceedings in Connecticut, which seek a judicial decision imposing the recognition of same-sex marriage upon the citizens of our state.

Under current state law the rights of a civil union are available to same-sex couples married in another jurisdiction. Those same-sex couples need only to apply, through the established procedures, to obtain a civil union. Although the civil union law passed in 2005 prohibits civil unions when one or both of the partners are already married, that prohibition does not apply to persons who are a party to a same-sex marriage. The prohibition only is effective if one of the partners is a member of a heterosexual marriage. The current public policy of Connecticut does not recognize, under any situations, same-sex marriages, therefore the marriage prohibition does not apply.

SB 699 would change the current policy in Connecticut, for the first time ever, by giving officially implied recognition to same-sex marriages in Connecticut. The question could then be raised, that since Connecticut recognizes same-sex marriages in other jurisdictions should it not recognize them within its own borders. Last year the legislature clearly expressed what it felt should be the proper definition of marriage for this state. Adoption of SB 699 would begin to erode that definition and expose current state policy to an eventual judicial override.

Some current members of same-sex marriages may find the need to enter into a civil union in Connecticut troublesome. They would prefer to have their relationship automatically recognized. However, when the parties to these marriages entered into them, they were fully aware that they would be recognized in very few other jurisdictions. Connecticut, unlike many other states, does not exclude them from any rights if they simply apply for a civil union. This option is not available in most states.

Last year the legislature extensively debated the issue of civil unions and same-sex marriage. We are only one year from that debate and already legislation is being proposed that may weaken the conclusion of that debate. If the legislature wishes to take up the same-sex marriage debate, it should do it openly, and not allow such an important established public policy to be chiseled away piece by piece.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Reynolds", written in a cursive style.

Deacon David Reynolds