

Good afternoon Committee Co-Chairs and members of the Judicial Committee.

My name is Jason Kelliher, I am a resident of Stamford, CT. Today I am speaking in support of Bill #699, An Act Concerning the Recognition of Foreign Contracts.

Just over two years ago I was faced with a hard decision. The man I had been seeing for three years at the time was graduating from law school and had been offered a job out of state. I was faced with the difficult position of uprooting my life, leaving my job, my family and friends to stay with him. I wasn't going to have a job lined up for me, or be able to assure myself that I would find one easily and I would have no network of friends and family outside of him to support me.

At the same time this was going on the decision of the Goodridge case in Massachusetts was handed down. I love my husband, Brian Rice, more than anything. But deciding to move away from everything I knew was hard. After the Goodridge verdict came back I couldn't have been happier. As residents of Brookline, MA, Brian and I could get married and have our relationship legally recognized. I wouldn't just be moving to Connecticut with someone I loved, I would be moving to Connecticut with my husband, with legal protections to our relationship.

Just over a month after marriage for same-sex couples was legal Brian and I were married in my parents back yard in a ceremony administered by a old high school friend. Two months later we moved. We hadn't thought about how moving would impact our marriage. It was a legal marriage from the state of Massachusetts, so why would we worry. After moving we found out that Connecticut would not recognize our marriage.

Things only got harder for us, I was having a hard time finding employment and thus had no health insurance except to be added Brian's policy, which thankfully his law firm offered to domestic partners. Unfortunately this benefit was a burden because he was taxed on my coverage as though it were extra income.

Then Brian was diagnosed with testicular cancer. We were devastated. To add to our frustration in researching treatment options and facilities, we were unsure if our marriage would allow for me to have decision making access for Brian, or any access at all. We ultimately decided on having Brian's treatment handled in New York because the New York Attorney General had issued an opinion that New York would recognize our marriage.

Finally, just over a year after we moved to Connecticut, the legislation for Civil Unions was passed. We initially felt that since Connecticut was going to provide for legal recognition of same-sex partnerships that the state would also recognize similar institutions from outside of the state. Unfortunately the opinion issued by Attorney General in September stated that Connecticut would not recognize, the legal marriage of a same-sex couple.

The certificate of marriage Brian and I received is identical to all certificates of marriage issued in the state of Massachusetts. We have been asked by many that since we want our relationship recognized in Connecticut why don't we get a Civil Union. My reply is: I am already married. Perhaps I have a narrow view point. But to me married is married, why should my husband and

I, have to have our relationship recognized separately just because we moved. If we move again to another state that has a different form of recognition for same-sex couples do we have to go through the process a third time?

I was married on June 26th, 2004 to my loving partner Brian Rice. We have now been together for over 5 years. We both vote regularly. We both pay taxes. We contribute to our community on many levels. We meet all of our civic obligations to the best of our abilities. Yet our community will not recognize our marriage. Just over a year ago I sat in this same position, I looked at the committee members present and asked them how would they feel if they would be required to have their relationships recognized separately every time they moved to a new state. I asked that a year ago, I ask it again today.

I thank you for you time and I ask that you consider moving forward with this legislation. There are currently thousands of legally married same-sex couples. Many of them may have to decide whether to move to Connecticut. For them, the knowledge that their marriage would be recognized will help make that decision easier.

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