

**TESTIMONY OF BRIAN AND ERIK LINDWALL-THOMAS TO
JUDICIARY COMMITTEE IN SUPPORT OF
RAISED BILL NO. 7395
“AN ACT CONCERNING MARRIAGE EQUALITY”**



Good afternoon, Chairman McDonald, Chairman Lawlor, and members of the Committee. My name is Brian Lindwall-Thomas and I am a resident of Monroe. I am here today with my partner of eight and a half years, Erik, to urge your support for Raised Bill No. 7395 “An Act Concerning Marriage Equality”.

Erik and I live in a modest community in Monroe with our two beautiful children Dylan now 4 and Amber now 2. We have a beautiful home with a picket fence, a dog and a cat. We are the typical American family. With one big difference--we are denied the right to be married.

In November of 2005 Erik and I, with our children by our side, took advantage of the new Civil Union law and had a Civil Union. We invited one hundred and twenty of our friends and family. Our ceremony was held in our local Unitarian Church. Our reception was fantastic and everyone had a wonderful time. To everyone that attended that day it was by all definitions a wedding. To me and Erik, and to all of our friends and family, we were married. However that entire day those two words stuck in my mind, “Civil Union”.

Our guests were also confused: What does civil union mean? And why not just call it a marriage?

Those questions are still in my mind today. Why can't we be married? Why does my family have to be treated differently with a separate definition and separate rights from other families? How do I explain to our children why their parents can't be married like their friends' parents?

The term "civil union" confuses many. But the word "married" is universal. There is no explanation required. We all understand its meaning.

I have been gay for as long as I can remember. I was born this way. I remember being beaten up in the eighth grade at the age of thirteen getting off of the school bus. A classmate threw me on the ground. He taunted me and called me several vulgar names that I will not say today, while a group of other kids just looked on. I lay on the ground and didn't move until he stopped kicking me. He apparently was told that being gay is wrong and that this is what you do to other kids who you think are gay, you beat them up. I stayed fearful and tried to pretend to be straight for as long as I could.

I did not come out until the age of twenty-five because of that fear. I am here today for that thirteen year old boy who knows he's gay and is living in fear of being beaten up everyday at the bus stop. I am here to tell him do not give up.

Being gay does not make us less of a person. We are brothers, sisters, fathers, mothers, lawyers, doctors, police officers, firefighters, public servants and I could go on. The point is we are people and we are everywhere. We pay taxes. We vote. We raise families. Why can't we be treated with respect and share the same basic rights as others? We want the same rights as you, we want to be married.

We ask all of you now, our representatives, please do what is right and fair. Please pass Bill No. 7395 for my family and the many same-sex couples and families in Connecticut. For you will be remembered for doing what is good and what is right. Thank you.

Brian and Erik Lindwall-Thomas
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