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## HEZEKIAH BEARDSLEY CONNECTICUT CHAPTER

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### Judiciary Committee

Good afternoon. I am Dr. Robert Zavoski, M.D., President of the Connecticut Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics and medical director of a community health center here in Hartford. I am here to voice the Academy's support of Raised Bill 7395, An Act Concerning Marriage Equality.

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. In February, 2002, the Academy released a policy statement entitled Co-Parent or Second-Parent Adoption by Same-Sex Parents. After a review of the available, peer reviewed research concerning 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.
- That both parents provide child support if the parents separate.
- The child's eligibility for health and other benefits from both parents.
- That both parents be able to consent for the child's health care, and to participate in educational, health care and other important decisions on behalf of the child.
- That the child's financial security is ensured in the event of the death of one of the parents through eligibility to all appropriate entitlements and survivors benefits.

Another review of the scientifically controlled research into the long term affects of parent's alternative living arrangements on the mental and social well-being of children was conducted for the American Academy of Pediatrics in 2006. This research again shows no detriments on the children beyond those expected in children who grow up in a home where

they experience divorce or parental strife and stress, regardless whether it is a traditional or alternative family. There is no scientifically controlled study that shows any negative effects on children specifically due to growing up with same sex parents.

What is known is that children who grow up in an environment where they feel loved, safe, wanted and are nurtured grow up to become far more stable and successful adults than their peers who grow up without such benefits, regardless of the sexual or other orientations of their parents.

Connecticut Public Act 00-228, An Act Concerning the Best Interest of Children in Adoption Matters, is worthy of its title by including 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, specifically access to health insurance coverage and other benefits provided by employers only to married employees among other social benefits available only through marriage.

Raised Bill 7395, An Act Concerning Marriage Equality addresses these deficiencies. It is consistent with the American Academy of Pediatrics' recommendation that legislation be enacted "assuring legal status equivalent to marriage for gay and lesbian partners" to provide "security and permanence for the children of those partnerships."

Connecticut must no longer discriminate against children based upon the sexual orientation of their parents. Frankly, legalized discrimination against the parents based upon their sexual orientation is a standard which is dated, mean-spirited and therefore should end.

Thank you for your kind attention.