

Testimony of Gina Bonfietti

In support of HB 7395: An Act Concerning Marriage Equality

March 26, 2007

My name is Gina Bonfietti. My partner, Jean Csvihinka and I live in Milford with our two daughters, Lia who is 6 and Jaden who is 5. Jean and I have been in a committed relationship for 22 years.

Thank you for the opportunity to express my feelings in support of the proposed marriage equality legislation that is before you.

Jean and I had a civil union October 1, 2005. It was an important step forward for our family, and we thank you as legislators for your role in that.

But as a "civil unioned" couple for one year and 5 months, we know that there are critical differences between civil unions and marriage. "Civil union" is less than marriage. It does not have the social or cultural meaning of marriage, and lacks the recognition and respect marriage brings to relationships. And as a separate classification for same-sex relationships, civil union marks our families as unequal.

I worry, when our children ask why we cannot get married, that they sense this.

The truth is that our family and our relationship is no different from married couples we know. Jean and I love and respect each other. We "put up" with the in-laws. We disagree about what color to paint the kitchen. We agree that piano lessons for the kids are not negotiable. We work hard to support our family, while trying to put something away for college and, unfortunately, very little for our retirement. Our greatest joy is our children and our priority is spending together as a family. We take the kids skating, swimming, and biking, we read to them before bed. We are active in our church and are thankful for the respect and love that we and our children receive from our congregation.

In our minds the importance of marriage has the most to do with basic civil rights. We want everyone--our friends and family, our children, the state--to call our relationship what it is: a marriage. Making a separate institution for same-sex families tells us and the world that we are second-class citizens.

We are so proud of the steps Connecticut has taken to recognize our rights, our relationships, and our families. By supporting marriage, you can reassure the children of same-sex couples that their parents are respected and their families are valued.

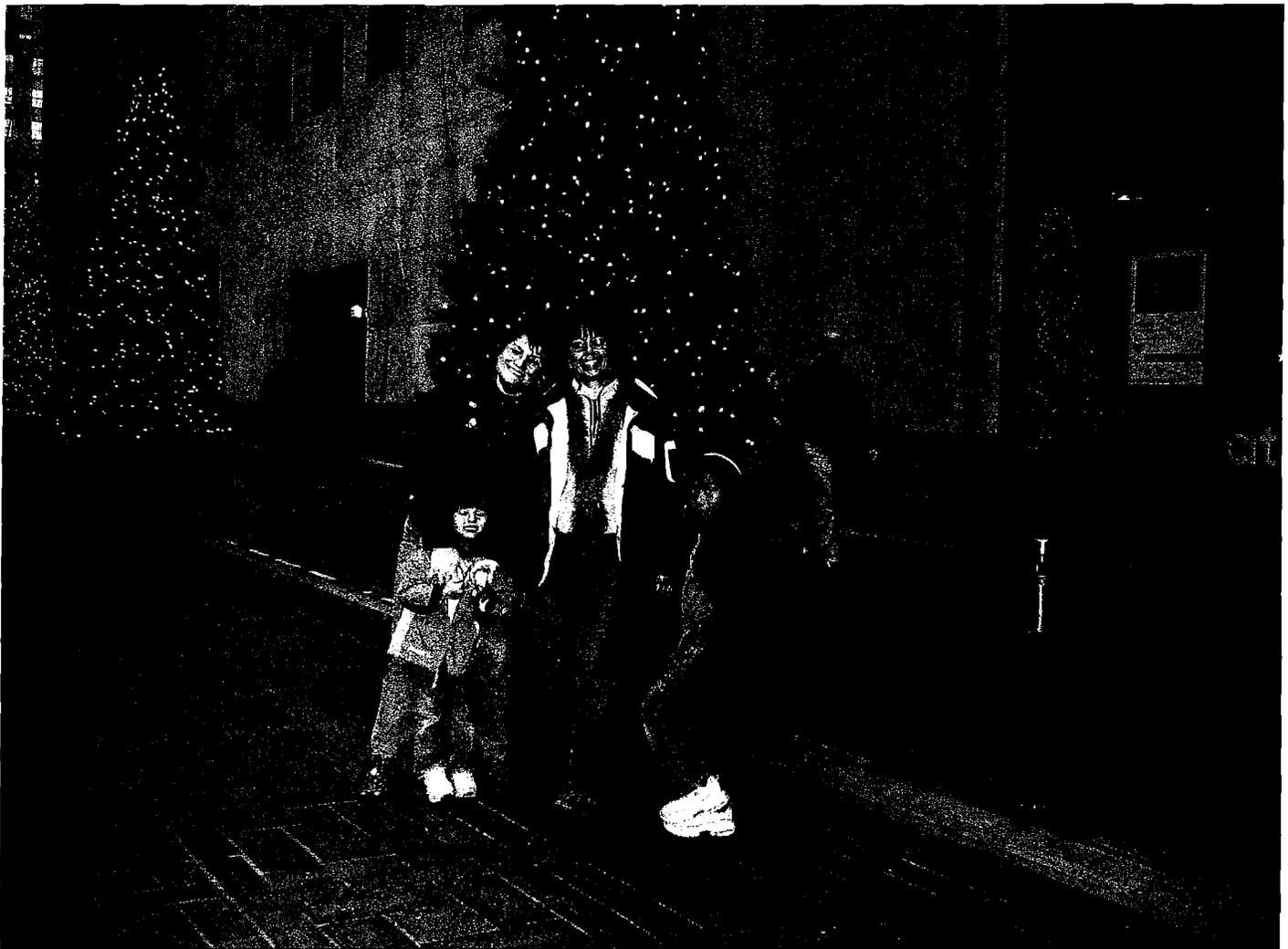
Please help Connecticut continue leading the way in civil rights for its gay and lesbian citizens by passing this bill.

With sincere thanks,

Gina Bonfietti

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Our family: left to right: Jaden, Gina, Jean and Lia