

Testimony in support of House Bill 7395:
An Act Concerning Marriage Equality
Jeffrey B. Koller of Stamford, CT

I urge your support of marriage equality here in the state of Connecticut. Let me tell you why:

My partner John Lionetti and I have been in a loving, committed relationship for the past thirty-eight years. We have lived in Stamford, CT for those many years, in the same house that my partner's parents purchased in 1953.

Our commitment to each other is not only spiritual, but also financial, having had a joint saving/checking account since the beginning of our relationship. I have been employed full time by IBM since 1986, where domestic partnership is recognized and where John, my partner, is covered by my benefits. John has been a hair stylist in the Greenwich, CT area for the last 18 years. Prior to that we managed/worked at his parents restaurant in Stamford, and we were literally together 24/7 (don't know if many heterosexual married couples could/would be able to claim the same). Having worked at the restaurant serving the public, our relationship was known to many and therefore we are relatively well-known in the Stamford area. Fortunately, both our families have been involved with and very supportive of us, not only our immediate families, but our extended family members as well. In fact for the first four years of our relationship we lived with John's parents in the same house, both families would get together for holidays, enjoying each others company.

We also maintain a large base of friends (gay and straight) who do not judge or have problems with our relationship; we try to do the same. But, then again, being gay does not totally describe who we are. There are many more components that go into that equation.

John and I have devoted 38 years of our lives together. It hurts us to know that our government denies us the right to marry, when we have loved each other, worked in the community, paid taxes, contributed to society, and nurtured each other and our families for so long—*just like* married couples of different genders. It is a disgrace that we cannot enjoy the same status that married residents in the state of Connecticut have.

I would like to have it explained to me, just what horrific, unimaginable destruction would occur should this bill pass and give couples like us our due acknowledgement, fairness, and respect?

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