

Testimony of Jessica Hajdasz in Support of HB 7395:

An Act Concerning Marriage Equality



My husband Brian and I on our wedding day.

Honorable Members of the Legislature, thank you for taking the time to hear my testimony today. I wish to tell you why I support marriage equality.

I am the adult daughter of lesbian mothers. I have first-hand life experience that denying marriage rights to same-sex couples is a denial of basic and fundamental human rights to my parents and to our family.

I can tell you that my personal experience provides me with a very real view into the lives of many families headed by gay and lesbian parents, including my own. I hope my experience helps you understand what an important issue you are considering today as you debate the rights of same-sex couples to have their unions recognized as marriage versus civil union.

We all know that marriage is an entryway to essential rights, protections and responsibilities. While not all people share my view, I believe in, and respect, the value and meaning of marriage. On October 15, 2005 I married my husband, Brian. We were very blessed to share in this joyful rite surrounded by our families and our friends. Since we have begun to build our life together, we have purchased our first home, adopted a grey hound, and we recently learned that this coming September we will have our first child.

As a young adult in the early years of creating a family together with Brian, I am learning more every day the basic rights, protections and responsibilities that come with marriage. But I am also learning more and more how important marriage is socially, to us as a couple, and how important it will be to our children

I can not help but look at my mother and her partner and see the injustice that stands before them in a world were their relation is made to feel less that equal to the relationship I share with my husband. Having had a civil union they may have the same legal rights that Brian and I share but from the moment they picked up their civil union license we all recognized that Connecticut wanted to make a very clear distinction between their marital status and ours. It is difficult for me to explain how unfair it feels to know that the women who raised me, supported and guided me, loved and nurtured me and provided me

with my primary examples of what it is to make a life commitment to a ones partner, are not considered as deserving and I to call their union a marriage.

No one denies the power of the word marriage. It is a simple word that is recognized in every country, every culture, and every religion. We understand the depth of the commitment people express when they enter a marriage. We know the legal rights they gain when they marry. Our children understand our family's status in society when our parents are married. We don't have to wonder what the union of two people is when they can say, "We are married."

What is civil union? So often when I hear my moms tell people they "have a civil union", we all experience that confusion and we all experience that feeling of inferiority. People don't know what it means, how to say it, what rights it carries. But they know one thing right away; they know it is not a marriage. They cannot be included, they are not equal. It is as simple as that.

As I look ahead and anticipate my first child I can't help but think of the world that this child will grow up in. I find myself realizing the responsibility that I will have as a mother. I want to do whatever I can to ensure my child will have the right to live their life happily and with equal respect and protection. And I want to know they will have the choice and the right to marry someday, whether they are gay, lesbian or straight. I want them to live in a world that is inclusive of all loving, commitment adults.

And so I ask you, will you stand on the side of equality and inclusion? Will you take the next step, not just affording legal rights, but to vote to protect and include all of my family in marriage? If you are, then you will ensure that same-sex couples are treated with the same respect you have given me. Do not stand by the law that calls them equal but different. Let my family and all couples in Connecticut call our loving unions' marriage.

Thank you.

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