



## Working for equal marriage rights in Connecticut

**Testimony of Anne Stanback, Executive Director, *Love Makes a Family*  
Judiciary Committee  
March 26, 2007  
Support for HB 7395, AAC Marriage Equality**

*Love Makes a Family* was formed in 1999 to pass important pro-family adoption legislation. Connecticut's co-parent adoption bill became law in 2000 and at that point, we turned our organizing, lobbying and education efforts to the issue of marriage.

Our marriage equality campaign is now entering its seventh year.

In those seven years, support for the issue has steadily grown and broadened, resonating from a justice perspective, an economic perspective and a personal perspective.

That is why today you will hear testimony in support of HB 7395 from same-sex couples, from children raised by same-sex couples and from parents of gay and lesbian children. You will hear from child advocates and labor unions; from clergy and justices of the peace. You also have received testimony from three of our state's constitutional officers, as well as from the mayors of three of our state's largest cities—Hartford, New Haven and Stamford.

The universality of this issue is why the *Hartford Courant*, the *Journal Inquirer*, the *New London Day*, the *Norwich Bulletin*, the *Meriden Record-Journal* and the *New York Times* have all published editorials in the past two years urging the Connecticut legislature to pass a marriage equality bill.

Understanding that our state's economic health depends on being able to hire and retain a highly skilled workforce, the *Hartford Business Journal* also published an editorial two months ago where they wrote:

*It's time that Connecticut showed its progressive, thoughtful side and became the first state in the nation to legislatively endorse gay marriage...The institution of marriage benefits us as a society. It benefits us as business organizations. It benefits us as a culture. But so far, it doesn't benefit us all.*

(excerpt from *Hartford Business Journal*, February 5, 2007)

In 2005, this committee and this legislature passed a civil union law that conferred critical legal and financial rights to same-sex couples. For those protections and for your leadership, our community is very grateful.

But we worry that the civil union law will be used as an excuse to delay or deny loving, committed same-sex couples the right to marry. We worry about a desire to wait until everyone becomes comfortable.

The truth is that everyone is *not* comfortable and some never will be. But discomfort should not be a barrier to equality. Waiting is not a neutral action. It disadvantages real people in our state.

Some simply can't afford to wait. People are aging; people are seriously ill. In my case, I have an 84-year old father, and he wants nothing more than to see me legally married to my partner of 23 years in the eyes of my state.

Some will testify today that you are wasting your time with this bill—that the difference between marriage and civil union is a matter of semantics.

Our response is that either civil union and marriage *are* the same, and therefore why not grant us the word.

Or, civil union and marriage are *not* the same and then what legitimate reason does the state have for withholding the word and the status of civil marriage from committed couples?

We hope that after listening to today's speakers, you will conclude that there *is* no reason for the current exclusion. We hope that when you vote, you will vote for fairness for all Connecticut families. Thank you.