

**Testimony of Maria and Lidia Agramonte-Gomez
To Judiciary Committee In Support Of Raised Bill HB No. 7395:
An Act Concerning Marriage Equality**



Lidia & Maria's Family Civil Union Celebration

Thank you, Chairman McDonald, Chairman Lawlor, and members of the Committee. I am Maria Agramonte-Gomez. My partner Lidia and I live in New Britain and were the first to receive a Civil Union license in Hartford on October 1, 2005. We were joined in "Civil Union" later that day. We thank-you for giving us the legal rights of "marriage" that are within the laws of the State of Connecticut. However today I am here to tell you why it is so important that you support marriage equality.

While the "Civil Union" gave us some tangible rights, granting full marriage rights is about the intangible. My partner and I have participated in this new social construct and we have been blessed that our family and friends have been fully accepting.

But being "Civil Unioned" is not being married. Marriage is a universal concept that is recognized by all. With Civil Union we have yet to find the right word to describe our relationship, when we used the word "partner" with our new neighbors they thought we had a business together. At the Doctor's office there is no place on the forms that define our relationship as we are not "Single", "Married" "Widowed" or "Divorced". When we tell them we are "Civil Unioned" or "Civilized" we have to explain what that means. "Civil Union" is like being in Limbo, we are not single but we are not married.

Lidia and I have been together for 7 years. We have a strong committed relationship. Our life together is no different than that of our married friends: we worry about our health, our finances, our retirement. We are happy to have some rights and protections, but we made a commitment to each other that is real and lasting--and "civil union" does not and cannot convey to others the depth of our relationship.

Also with Civil Union, sexual orientation is always part of the equation. Because Civil Union is only for same-sex couples and marriage only for heterosexual couples our families will always be seen as different, set apart because our relationships are somehow not worthy of marriage.

Lidia and I attended many of the hearings held on the "Civil Union" bill. We listened to the arguments against granting same-sex couples marriage equality, from those who believe we are an abomination, to those who feel marriage is only about procreation. At one debate we were told that it is not possible for same-sex couples to commit to each other in the same way as heterosexual couples.

But I still believe that the state and the community we have chosen to live in will deliver on the promise of American freedom and equality. We ask that you have the courage today to be the first lawmakers to do the right thing, by eliminating marriage inequality now.

Thank you.

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