

**Testimony in Support of  
HB 7395: An Act  
Concerning Marriage  
Equality**



National Council of Jewish Women

March 26, 2007

Dear Senator McDonald, Representative Lawlor, Senator Handley, Representative Fox, Senator Kissel, Representative O'Neill, and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

It is with great pride that the National Council of Jewish Women of Connecticut stands beside those that support HB 7395, *An Act Concerning Marriage Equality* and the right of gay and lesbian couples to legally affirm and protect their relationships through marriage.

Although marriage is a religious rite for many, if not most people, marriage licenses are issued and regulated by the state. The constitutional guarantee of religious liberty and separation between religion and state requires that civil marriage be made available to all on a nondiscriminatory basis. By not allowing Connecticut's same sex-couples to marry, the state would be violating both the letter and the spirit of the First Amendment by imposing a single definition of marriage—a definition derived from the religious principles of some—on all of its citizens.

Opponents of Marriage Equality claim that the institution of marriage will somehow suffer if gays and lesbians are allowed to marry as well. NCJW does not agree. By allowing gay and lesbian couples to join together in civil unions, Connecticut has seen these couples form partnerships, have children, and create families and they will continue to do so. We have seen no ill effect on heterosexual marriages whatsoever. To deny couples in committed relationships the same legal benefits accorded spouses in heterosexual marriages is prejudicial, counterproductive, and morally offensive.

Connecticut has been a leader in this country, making great strides in legalizing civil unions and protecting gays and lesbians against hate crimes and discrimination. We must take this final step of approving marriage equality to eliminate discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. NCJW is proud to support HB 7593 and will continue to work for the enactment and enforcement of laws and regulations that protect civil rights and individual liberties for all of Connecticut's citizens.

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*NCJW is a volunteer organization, inspired by Jewish values, that works to improve the quality of life for women, children, and families and to ensure individual rights and freedoms for all through its network of 90,000 members, supporters, and volunteers nationwide. There are over 850 NCJW members in Connecticut.*