



PFLAG Hartford

Testimony by **John K. Currie** in support of HB 7395: An Act Concerning Marriage Equality

I speak today wearing my PFLAG hat. PFLAG stands for Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays. PFLAG is a national non-profit organization with over 200,000 members and supporters and over 500 affiliated chapters in the United States. I am the Vice-President of our Hartford PFLAG Chapter.

PFLAG's mission is to promote the health and well-being of gay and lesbian persons, their families and friends. This spring you, the Connecticut General Assembly, will also have the chance to help promote the health and well-being of gay and lesbian citizens and their families. You can do so by enacting the Marriage Equality Bill.

Today I want you to visualize a major league baseball park. It doesn't matter whether you are a Red Sox fan or a Yankee fan. You pick the park. The score is tied and we are late in the game. The runner at 2nd base is my 29 year old son. Peter is his name. Let me tell you a little about Peter.

Peter grew up in West Hartford. Peter did his undergraduate history studies at Oxford University in England. He went on to work at UCLA and Yale, and then obtained his Master of Public Health Degree from Johns Hopkins University. Peter is now a 2nd year student at the Georgetown Law Center. Peter is bright, moral and fun. Remember that he is standing at 2nd base.

Peter came out to me as a gay man during his college years. While at Oxford University he met Philip, his life partner. Philip is a world-class musician, singer, and conductor. Peter and Philip have been together now for 9 years. Peter and Philip are a **bi-national couple**. Philip is a citizen of England. Peter and Philip have spent thousands of dollars in legal expenses in order to stay together as a couple in the United States.

Keep the baseball park image before you. The batter hits a long line drive that lands in the outfield gap. Peter dashes from 2nd base, hoping to score. As he slides across home plate the ball is still in the outfield. Peter looks up—and he is staring into your face. **You are the umpire.** This legislative body is the umpire. You have the job to decide whether he has scored—whether he has made it safely home—whether he is entitled to marriage equality.

As Peter approaches home plate you, the umpire, can hear loud voices from the stands. You can hear the bellowing. "He's out by a mile." "They shouldn't have even let him into this ballpark." Meanwhile, you know that the baseball is still in the outfield and that Peter should be called "Safe!".

My son Peter and his partner Philip should have the opportunity to marry. A nongay couple that has been together for 4 hours can apply for a marriage license. I ask that you honor the content of Peter's character and bring marriage equality to Connecticut.

The proposed Marriage Equality Bill language defines marriage as the "legal union of two persons." It can sound abstract. It is anything but abstract when you are Peter Currie in a bi-national relationship---on the outside looking in. Civil unions are not enough. Only marriage will give Peter the **legal standing** to challenge in court our federal government's refusal to provide naturalization rights to same-sex bi-national couples.

Do your job as the umpire. Make the correct call at home plate. For the Peters of Connecticut and their PFLAG families.

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