

**Testimony of Suzanne Rogers and Barbara Upton in Support of  
House Bill No 7395: An Act Concerning Marriage Equality**



Good evening Chairman Lawlor, Chairman McDonald and members of the Judiciary Committee.

My name is Suzanne Rogers and this is my partner Barbara Upton. We live in Avon and have been in a committed relationship for 31 years. We are here today in support of the marriage equality legislation that is before you.

I am a registered nurse at a local medical institution and Barb is a financial manager for an area construction company. Our lives are much like any other couple that has been together for a long time, sometimes exciting, sometimes a little boring, but always loving. We unfortunately have no children of our own but are deeply involved in the lives of our brothers and sister's children, as well as their children as the family grows. These family members basically don't remember a time when we were not in their lives as a couple and refer to each of us on both sides of our families as their aunts. Barb's mother always referred to me as her 'chosen' daughter.

In 31 years we have faced many crises together including the illnesses and ultimate deaths of 4 parents. We have also celebrated wondrous births of 12 nieces and nephews and 8 grand nieces and nephews.

But in the last few years we have also experienced some significant personal medical issues which made the 2003 bill that granted Declaration of Decision Making and the 2005 Civil Union bill all that much more significant to us. Problems that we never ever thought about, came to light and made a very tough time that much harder. On Oct. 1, 2005 we had a Civil Union not because we believed it was equal to marriage but because we knew we needed the protections that it offered. We thank you for those protections.

What Civil Unions don't give us is the same respect and dignity that marriage affords. A separate ---- yet less than equal --- category was created for same-sex couples like us, and we are reminded on an almost daily basis of those inequalities:

For example, when I requested a Family Medical Leave to care for Barb after her recent emergency surgery due to an accident, I had to show proof of our Civil Union, although the very fact that we had been "unionized" was common knowledge to my supervisors. I double whether a heterosexual married couple would have had to provide proof of their marriage license to receive similar benefits.

And just in the past couple of weeks, when I requested information on my retirement package from a previous employer, I was told that I could leave a portion of my benefits to Barb for a shorter period of time as a beneficiary but not for the remainder of her life (as provided to a married couple). I was told that Barb in a hospital situation would be treated as my 'next of kin', but in terms of my retirement benefits would certainly not be treated as a 'spouse' in the event of my death. And too, in death, neither of us is regarded as a surviving spouse in terms of social security benefits.

In considering my future retirement I also have to think about health insurance. If I was to go on Barb's health insurance the additional cost to provide my coverage is not pre-tax as it is with 'married' heterosexual couples and proves to be a substantial burden that will require a lot of consideration in my retirement plans.

Most significant to us is the fact that we have been together more than half of our lives. We think we deserve to be treated like any other couple who has committed their lives to each other, by being able to marry. Our relationship has been labeled in the past as a "Domestic Partnership" and more recently "A Civil Union", but no word other than MARRIED can describe our relationship to each other, and no word carries the meaning of love and family. Governor Rell described a civil union as "sufficient". The word sufficient suggests a close meeting of a need --- a CLOSE meeting of a need.

We are tired of having to explain to our families, colleagues, bureaucrats and others what a civil union is, and in many cases the response is "Oh, you mean you're like a married couple". We are married in every way, but our government has denied us the word marriage. We think after 31 years of loving and caring for each other, we've earned it.

Thank you.

Suzanne Rogers and Barbara Upton  
6 Parkview Drive  
Avon, CT 06001-3450