

Testimony in Support of HB 7395, an Act Concerning Marriage Equality

Submitted 3/26/07 by Teresa M. Lawrence

Why Marriage Is So Important

Working so long and hard for same-sex marriage and achieving only Civil Union, although a step forward, was still a major disappointment for me and my partner of 38 years, Carolyn. Nonetheless, we and this Legislative Committee and previous ones have come a *long* way together. To those of you who supported us, thank you. However, we're back still seeking the equality of marriage.

Some of you may know I'm an ordained Interfaith Minister. I went to One Spirit Interfaith Seminary in N.Y. not for a new career, but for my own growth. I've performed several services for friends and family--Civil Union, Funeral, and Baby Naming ceremonies.

To illustrate why marriage equality is important to us, and to thousands of loving and committed couples and their families around Connecticut like us, let me tell you about John. My partner and I have an honorary grandson, John. His two moms asked us to be his Grandmas before he was born. Of course we were thrilled and said yes. I was especially pleased since a major regret in my life is not having had children. I know I'd have been a good mother. However, when I was young, it was a different world and it would have been considered selfish and unconscionable. Happily, we have had the joys and wonders of being Grandmas since John was born. When he was about 9, his moms asked me to perform their Civil Union. We were all excited, and I was especially pleased to see how excited John was.

As a family, we try to schedule some time together at least every two weeks. Since John was so excited about things, I decided to include him in the ceremony. On family nights, he and I would go into his play room, and I would have John dictate to me some of the things his moms do with him, or things they have provided him with for which he is grateful.

Then we would play a game of his choice. In three family nights we finished our task. He kept wanting to include one of his favorite songs, "Celebration." I got him to agree that we could do that at the end of the service. After sharing John's list, I want to talk briefly about why this whole experience is so relevant to why we are gathered here today. But first, John's list:

What I'm Most Grateful For

- Everything you gave me (toys, electronic games, lessons in how to play the piano, and sports)
- Trips
- My life
- Helping me with great times and tough ones like when our kitty Toots died
- Getting together with people
- Things not just for me, but for my friends, Jason and Kyle, and for cousin Steven

What I Wish For My Moms

- To have fun and a great life!
- Great trips (with Me of course)
- For all of us to succeed in our new house and environment in South Carolina

A thoughtful, fun-loving child like John deserves all the protections and full equality that other children are given, and that means allowing John's parents to be married. It's hard for kids to explain to their peers what a "Civil Union" is. It's even harder for the other kids to understand what it is their young friends are telling them.

People who have the right and privilege to marry describe their status as "married." Those of us in Civil Unions make painful jokes about whether we are now Civilized or Unionized, but we manage just fine. With your help, though, our children will do much better when they no longer have to explain what a Civil Union is, but can talk about how their folks are married just as their friends' folks are married. These wonderful children raised by same-sex parents that we dearly love should not be given a separate category—a separate and less than equal status for their family—just because their parents are of the same gender. Making it better for the children, of course, will strengthen *all* families. Thank you.

Terry Lawrence and Carolyn King
560 Gaylord Mt. Rd.
Hamden, CT, 06518
(203)281-0507