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Testimony of Shirley Pripstein, Member, Executive Committee,
Family Law Section of the Connecticut Bar Association
House Bill 5925
An Act Concerning Civil Unions
Judiciary Committee
March 17, 2008

Senator McDonald, Representative Lawlor and members of the Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before the committee to comment on House Bill 5925, An Act Concerning Civil Unions.

My name is Shirley M. Pripstein. I am an attorney who has practiced in the area of divorce and family law for over 27 years. I am here today to speak on behalf of the Family Law Section of the Connecticut Bar Association in support of House Bill 5925. The Family Law Section of the CBA consists of over 700 members who have a great interest in bills affecting family law procedures and issues concerning dissolution of marriage. **On behalf of the CBA Family Law Section, I respectfully request that the Judiciary Committee favorably report House Bill 5925.**

Section 3 of House Bill 5925 would require the State of Connecticut to treat a same-sex marriage that is valid in the jurisdiction in which it occurred as a Civil Union in Connecticut. The CBA Family Law Section supports this approach, which would clarify the rights of same-sex couples who marry outside of the State of Connecticut, and then subsequently establish residence in Connecticut.

The Civil Union law enacted in 2005 contained a detailed section on the recognition of foreign civil unions but was silent on the issue of recognition of foreign

same-sex marriages. This is an oversight which leaves same-sex couples legally married in another state or country in legal limbo in Connecticut. Is a same-sex couple who have been legally married in Massachusetts legally married in Connecticut, or are they legal strangers? A Connecticut court could reach either conclusion. The sensible approach is not to leave the issue open for the courts to decide but to provide by statute that a same-sex couple validly married in a foreign jurisdiction be treated as civil unioned in Connecticut. That is exactly what Section 3 of House Bill 5925 does.

For this reason, the Family Law Section of the Connecticut Bar Association respectfully requests that the Judiciary Committee **favorably report** House Bill 5925.

I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.