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## Testimony in Support of "An Act Concerning Civil Unions"



My name is Holly Robinson. I am a resident of Danbury and an attorney at Carmody & Torrance in Waterbury. My partner, Lois and I have been together for 8 years and entered into a civil union in October 2005.

Since the date of our civil union, we have definitely had instances of confusion and frustration as we have had to explain to people what benefits our civil union status should provide us. The most prominent moment forever in our memory involves the birth of our son. In February 2007, Lois gave birth to our son, Andrew, at a mid-sized Connecticut hospital.

Prior to our arrival at our selected hospital for his delivery, we had spoken with the hospital registrar and explained that we had a civil union. We were assured that we would have no problems including my name on the birth certificate.

Needless to say, after the birth of our son, as we were being swarmed by family members and trying to handle all of the emotions of first time parents, we hit a snag when we asked the nurses for a civil union birth certificate worksheet.

The hospital registrar with whom we had spoken was unavailable and none of the nurses on duty had ever heard of such a document. The nurses were always very accommodating and very apologetic that they could not help us.

I made a call to the state Department of Public Health and was launched into a confusing and frustrating conversation with the person at the other end of the line who also had no idea what I was talking about. After some time, I was able to leave a voicemail message for a supervisor at the department, at the completion of which I called our attorney for guidance. Fortunately, the supervisor I had reached returned my call promptly and was not only helpful but was apologetic and even congratulatory about our new arrival.

A few hours later, we were met with another issue with the hospital social worker. She starting asking Lois the usual questions for new mothers before she switched to a dialogue about how she must talk about certain things with Lois because she “is a single mom.” We both quickly responded saying that she was in fact not a single mom, but we were both parents. The social worker was adamant, telling us ad naseum that “under the laws of the State of Connecticut, Lois is a single mother” and that she was to be treated as one. We could not convince her otherwise. By the time the session had ended, we were both emotionally exhausted.

Having a child is the single most amazing thing that has ever happened in our lives. It was a magical and emotional experience that we will never forget. Unfortunately, we felt frustrated by the constant battles that we felt we had to fight during our hospital stay, solely because of our legal status as a couple not being understood.

I understand that not every person we encounter will be fully informed or educated on the legal aspects of civil unions. We are currently living with that reality. However, it is something that a married couple never needs to stop and explain. When we speak with attorneys, financial advisors, banking professionals, doctors/nurses or any other general personal service professionals, we must stop and explain what a civil union is and what it means. At work, social events, cocktail parties or in general everyday life situations, when someone asks if we are married, we must explain why our answer is not simply “yes.”

No married couples who have committed themselves in the same way as we have will need to explain what their relationship means. No other married couple will need to call ahead, explain their situation, repeatedly ask for someone who might be knowledgeable to help and need to repeatedly stand their ground to convince someone of their relationship status.

It will not matter how informed people are in the long run, civil unions will always be considered less than marriage.

Thank you for your time and attention.

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