

## Testimony in Support of “An Act Concerning Civil Unions”



My partner and I have been together over 4 years. We bought a home together in Vernon, CT about 2 years ago and had our Civil Union ceremony April 1, 2007.

One of the struggles my partner and I have faced by not having “marriage” available to us is the denial of benefits at my company. My company is a very large, global consumer products company located in southern Connecticut and although many similar companies do offer benefits to domestic/civil union partners, mine did not.

In approaching our human resource representatives about the benefits for my partner, I was met with a quick “no” and “the company does not offer domestic partner benefits”. When I explained that civil unions were different, they passed my question on to someone else, as well as to the legal department. This was in March of 2007, before our civil union. I gave the company the benefit of the doubt and assumed that once they understood that a civil union was essentially the same as marriage in Connecticut, they would be more than happy to extend the benefits, especially given the company’s strong affirmative action policy (See below):

*“All applicants for employment and employees of the company shall be treated equally without regard to race, color, religion, age, gender, disability, sexual orientation, marital status, national origin, citizenship, ancestry or any other classes protected by law.*

*Our policy governs all aspects of employment including recruitment, selection, job assignment, compensation, promotion, discipline, termination and access to benefits and training without regard to race, color, religion, age, gender, disability, sexual*

*orientation, marital status, national origin, citizenship, ancestry or any other classes protected by law.”*

After being given the runaround and no answer for nine months I finally received my answer...“No”. I was quite surprised, as well as hurt and angry. The HR rep admitted it was a financially driven decision, but I still don't understand how it can be possible for employers to legally pick and choose whom they offer benefits to and discriminate!

I truly believe if we had the right to marry, the company and other companies would be more likely to extend benefits to same sex spouses. But because it is called a civil union, it gives employers an excuse to treat employees differently and unequally.

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