5925

Sandra Rachel Baker
28 Thomas Street
West Hartford, CT 06119
sandrarachel@sbcglobal.net

March 13, 2008

Dear Legislators,

My partner and I had a civil union on February 24, 2006 and we were expecting our son in November of 2007. Shortly before November, we were attending one of our prenatal visits, when my partner and I asked our doctor whether we, as a civil unioned couple, should expect to encounter any difficulty at the hospital in having both of our names on our son's birth certificate. As a civil unioned couple, whose rights are less than well-defined in Connecticut and nationally, it was very important to us to make sure both of our names appeared on our son's birth certificate. Our doctor, who did not know the answer to our question, assured us she would speak to the birth certificate department at our hospital and call us.

A few days later, we received a call from our doctor and much to our disappointment, she informed us that the birth certificate department at this well known hospital in Hartford indicated that as a same sex couple, regardless of the fact that we had had a civil union, we could not have both of our names on our son's birth certificate. I told our doctor that this was not our understanding of the law and asked what we could do. She did not have an answer.

At first we were at a loss as to what to do. We were so sure, as a civil unioned couple, we had the same rights as a married couple to be on the birth certificate. I wondered I the hospital understood that we were unioned. I called the department at the hospital myself and spoke with one of the employees. She indicated the same to me as she had told our doctor.

Within a day or two, our disappointment turned to anger. Over the next days, I called a couple of acquaintances who are attorneys. First, I was asked which hospital I was dealing with. I was told that multiple hospitals were telling civil unioned couples that they could not both be on the birth certificate. However, our hospital was not a familiar culprit. One of the attorneys indicated they would send us a form that we would need to fill out to have both of us on the birth certificate. I was advised to call our Town's vital statistics department, as they, not the hospital, are in charge of issuing the birth certificate.

A day or two later, I received a call back from vital statistics. Upon explaining our plight, I was told that the hospital was incorrect and that as a civil unioned couple, both myself and my partner were entitled to be on our son's birth certificate. This was a relief to us. The vital statistics department employee told me to call back to the hospital, indicate what vital statistics had said, and get the name of the hospital personnel if she still refused to follow the law.

I next called our hospital and left a message for the birth certificate department. A couple of days later, I received a call from someone with whom I had never spoken. I explained our situation and this particular employee indicated that we would have to fill out a special form and the birth certificate would be hand-typed; but that we should not have a problem when we arrive at the hospital to have our son.

While we were relieved to learn that we would finally be afforded the same rights as a married couple, we couldn't help but wonder why this was not the case in the first place. Isn't civil union the same as being married?

Our experience demonstrates that civil union, as compared to marriage, is more than separate and less than equal. Please consider legislation that would allow same sex couples the right to marry.

Very truly yours,

Sandra Rachel Baker