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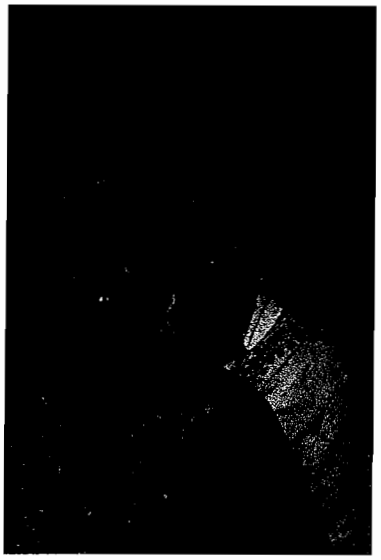
**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF AN ACT CONCERNING CIVIL UNION**



My name is Susan Rosengrant and I have been in relationship with my life partner, Nancy Ryan, since 1982. On August 26, 2006 we celebrated our love and commitment by having a Civil Union and ceremony here in Connecticut . We wanted to be the first gay couple in our town of Bethel to have a Civil Union; in fact, our Town clerk was willing to open Town Hall doors on Saturday so we could be the first! However, we also wanted our families to be present for a big celebration. Nancy's sister was already to be married in 2005 when the Civil Union law passed, so we decided to wait one year to give everyone a chance to recoup and travel back to Connecticut for our ceremony. The almost 200 guests, many from Nancy's large family, were delighted to witness our civil union. We were very happy to finally have the legal rights of heterosexual couples. Or so we thought.

I am a retired school principal, having worked 31 years as an educator and administrator in Westchester County , New York , and Nancy is a self-employed carpenter and wood worker here in Connecticut . We have lived together in our Bethel home for over 20 years. Nancy volunteers her construction knowledge by serving as the chair of the Bethel Public Site and Building Committee. She was appointed and entrusted with helping Bethel□s administration determine how to evaluate and strengthen our town's infrastructure. I have been trained and have served as an election moderator for our town as well. Currently, we are immersed in care-giving for Nancy's ailing parents who also live in Bethel . We feel a real part of this place we call our home.

On three occasions between 1999 and 2001 before I retired from my school district, I requested that Nancy be enrolled in my health benefits package. I was unable to do that because Nancy and I were not married. When Connecticut granted us the ability to be in a civil union, I believed that Nancy and I would then have all the rights accorded to heterosexual couples under state law. The School District, however, contends that they will not allow Nancy to be covered on my insurance because we were not married at the

time of my retirement on July 1, 2001. So, it is clear that even if Nancy and I had been in a civil union at the time of my retirement, it would have done us no good with my employer in New York . While I am challenging this determination with my legal counsel, it is evident to Nancy and me that only marriage will provide us with the real legal rights and protections that we need.

We thank you for your attention to this critically important matter of marriage equality for all.

Respectfully submitted by

Susan E. Rosengrant and Nancy J. Ryan

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