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**TESTIMONY OF WENDY THOMPSON IN SUPPORT OF AN ACT
CONCERNING CIVIL UNIONS.**

My name is Wendy Thompson. My partner, Cheryl, and I have been in a committed relationship since 2002. We live in Eastford where we are raising two sons, ages 10 and 13. Cheryl works in the field of special education and I stay at home and care for our two children, both of whom have special needs.

Cheryl and I entered into a civil union in 2006. We did so with very mixed feelings. As two women who love each other, it bothered us a great deal to have to participate in a separate entity that is just for lesbian and gay people. Civil unions simply do not come close to giving our relationship the dignity and respect that married couples have. It is a term that many people are not even familiar with. And as parents, we do not want our two children to have to explain that what their parents have is different and lesser than what their friends' parents have – a marriage.

At the same time, we believed that it was important for our family to take advantage of many of the legal rights and protections afforded by civil unions. It was, however, a great surprise for us to realize that civil unions do not actually give us the legal rights of a married couple. Cheryl started a new job last fall in a large public school system in Massachusetts. When she attempted to add me to her health insurance, she was told she could not do so because we are not married. She was told that Massachusetts recognizes marriages for same-sex couples, but not civil unions.

I am now without health insurance. If something catastrophic were to happen to me, I would become one more statistic as a person with a serious illness who lacks health insurance. And, sadly, in my case, the reason would be that Connecticut has not treated my relationship on an equal par with that of heterosexual couples.

While I appreciate the legislature's effort to address some of the problems with civil unions, my experience has led me to the conclusion that only marriage will provide full and real protections for gay and lesbian families.

Thank you.

Wendy Thompson
Eastford, CT