

Testimony in Support of "An Act Concerning Civil Unions"

5925



Senator MacDonald, Representative Lawler and esteemed members of the judiciary committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.

This weekend my husband Bill and daughter Brittany had dinner with my mother, brother and sister-in-law who came into town for a short visit; we went to a St. Patrick's Day party on Saturday, gathered our palms on Palm Sunday at church yesterday, and cleaned the house before settling down in front of the TV last night. We are a very typical suburban family.

In 2003, my partner/spouse/husband Bill and I entered into a civil union; we were "unionized" in Vermont, and held a religious service that was not recognized by the state of Connecticut or the federal government a month later here in Hartford. Originally, and on occasions when I have to be technical, I have used the words "civil union." But most of the time, I just say we are married. "My husband and I are married." There is universality with the institution of marriage and the words associated with it. You and everyone else knows what I mean when I say that. If you were to ask our friends, co-workers and neighbors about us, they would probably use the word "married." My hunch is that most couples who have been unionized use the same words we do - "married".

“marriage”, “wedding”, “family”, “love”. The only ones not using the word “marriage” are the State of Connecticut and the Federal government.

The understanding that automatically comes with the word “marriage” does not automatically come with the phrase “civil union.” There is no short-hand, there is no “I know exactly what you mean” nod when using it in discussion, there is no immediate recognition. No matter how you say it, “My husband and I were unionized.” “My partner and I are in a civil union.” “Bill and I have a civil union.”, the response ranges from blank stare to quizzical look. Then I simplify it, “We’re married.” I say. “Oh, OK, I get it,” is the response.

You are to be highly commended and praised for taking the bold and righteous step in April 2005 to approve the legal recognition of gay and lesbian relationships. I am personally grateful for that law (as well as the co-parent adoption law – it is those two laws that legally bind my family together) and I do not take my rights and responsibilities lightly or for granted. Now, 4 years later, I am pleased that you are asking us how that legal recognition is working out for us. While I appreciate the legislature’s effort in this civil union bill, only the word “marriage” in a legal sense will fix the problems created by giving a separate status to same sex couples.

Four years ago, opponents to the Civil Union law challenged you to “call it what it is.” On that one topic, I completely agree with them. Now is the time for the State of Connecticut to call it what it is. Marriage.

Thank you for your kind attention.

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