

Senator McDonald, Representative Lawlor, and all of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Ally Segal and I am a UCONN, School of Social Work student. I would like to thank you for this opportunity to speak today on Senate Bill 899, An Act Implementing the Guarantee of Equal Protection under the Constitution of the State for Same-Sex Couples. I believe passing this bill is very important for gay, lesbian, and bisexual people in Connecticut.

When I was in my teens, I identified as a lesbian but it did not mean that I did not want to someday get married. Like other girls my age, I wanted to have a wedding ceremony with the person I loved, which was then another girl. Now that I am older, I realize that weddings are fun but that marriage is the important thing. There are many rights, and responsibilities, that are involved when a person gets married. Assets and insurance flow more easily from partner to partner and the person you are spending your life with has the right to make decisions for you, if you are unable. I now identify as bisexual and I would still like to have the opportunity to marry the person I fall in love with, regardless of that person's gender. I was excited that the courts ruled that it was unconstitutional to deny marriage rights to anyone based on the gender of their partner. I would like the legislature to pass this law, so that state of Connecticut has the laws, which the courts have already decided should be legal, legal in the books.

I also believe it is important to change the language that was in the 1991 "gay rights law". People say "Sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me" but I don't believe this to be true. I have worked for the same agency for almost 10 years and have had all very positive performance reviews. I am in graduate school at the University of Connecticut, where I have about a 3.8 grade point average. I coach a master's level swim program that has grown since I have taken it over and have swimmers who have state records and can swim at the national level. I have worked with many organizations and been on the board of directors for a couple nonprofit organizations. I have been told by coworkers and supervisors that I excel at the things I do. My parents laugh at me when I tell them in amazement that someone gave me a compliment, because they see that it is deserved when I do not. I am the first to find my faults, criticize myself, and feel that I am not good enough for the things around me. It took me a while, but I believe that this is related to my sexual orientation. As a lesbian and as a bisexual, I have often been told that God doesn't love me, that I don't

deserve to get married and have a family, that it understandable if people don't like me because of my "lifestyle choice".

About 4 years ago, I had a supervisor at the agency I work at (thankfully not my direct supervisor) tell me that I make people uncomfortable and that it really is more professional to keep my personal life to myself. This same supervisor a week later, rushed up to a coworker that I was trying to solve a work problem with, cut me off as though I wasn't there, and exclaimed, "I heard you got engaged, tell us all about it! We want to know every detail."

I was at a party about 3 months ago. A coworker's 6 week old baby was crying and she had to go do something. She gave the crying baby to me and within a few minutes, I had calmed the child. He peacefully fell asleep in my arms. Many people thought that the baby was mine as he looked so comfortable there. This supervisor was shocked that I would be good with babies. Her perception was that if I wasn't straight, I wouldn't have any maternal skills.

What this supervisor has said to me and how she reacts to me is very hurtful. While I would like to be able to say, "It's her, not me", it does affect the way I look at myself. I understand that this law will not make everyone an instant fan of gays, lesbians, and bisexual people, but by the State of Connecticut saying that we are ok with people of all sexual orientations, it is a positive step in making our state a better place. While I may always be self conscious about my abilities, if we make a more positive environment now, maybe the children, who are growing up now and in the future, will not face the hurtful remarks that I have. Maybe they will grow up in a place where they feel truly valued as a whole person, of any sexuality.