

**Testimony of Jane Ferrall, Moderator Greater New Haven PFLAG
Judiciary Committee, March 6, 2009**

**PLEASE SUPPORT: SB 899, An Act Implementing the Guarantee of
Equal Protections Under the Constitution of the State for Same-Sex
Couples**

Senator McDonald, Representative Lawlor, and members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Jane Ferrall and I am the moderator of the Greater New Haven chapter of PFLAG, which stands for Parents, Friends and Families of Lesbians and Gays. I am also the parent of a gay son.

I urge the members of this committee to support the passage of SB 899. Our high court has taken the courageous and correct step of granting equal protection under the law to all citizens of our state, both gay and straight. Now the legislature should take the next step of approving the changes that need to be made in our laws, to bring them into conformity with the court's decision and, I believe, the beliefs of the majority of our state's citizens. Our society has moved on tremendously from our attitudes of 20 years ago, and our laws should, too: our law books should not contain hurtful or discriminatory language, whether this is a relic of the past or not.

My son was asked once what he expected out of life as a gay person, and I was really struck by his answer: to be treated like everyone else and to have a level playing field. He doesn't want special rights, he just wants to be treated the same as other people. The fact that we have now legalized marriage for him, and many others, in this state, was an enormous and hugely welcome step in the right direction. I have never been prouder to be a Nutmegger than I was that wonderful Friday in October.

I thought it might be helpful to the committee to hear a couple of concerns that many parents of gay children have. So many of our "new" parents come in expressing dual fears: first, that their precious child might be targeted or hurt simply because he or she is gay. Second, so many parents have heard terrible things about the so-called "gay lifestyle" of promiscuity or multiple partners. They worry that their child will be doomed to being a pariah, and become self-destructive as a result. Not a result that anyone on this committee would want for their child, that's for sure!

Marriage does so much for our gay children. It sends an incredibly powerful message to both them and the rest of society, that the way they are is acceptable and okay. We have extended a very important institution to include them. This tells our children and the people around them, that even on the highest governmental levels, they are affirmed. This can't help but make it a safer world for our kids. Second, permitting gay people to marry also says, your relationships are as important and sacred as anyone else's. You do not have to take a back seat, your love and commitment are just as special as any other person's. Bringing gay people into the fold, into the larger society, makes their relationships stronger and more committed. Yes, I'll be honest, I want all my kids to have that boring lifestyle of the spouse, the house, the kids and the dog... and I think that at heart, that's what most of them will eventually want as well. Finally, having marriage equality also gives us moms the chance to ask that M question and annoy all our kids, not just the straight ones!

In summary, I ask this committee to take the additional steps necessary to make marriage equality a reality in this state and in our law books. Thank you for listening.

Jane Ferrall