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

**Testimony of Anne Stanback, Executive Director, Love Makes a Family
Judiciary Committee, March 6, 2009**

Senator McDonald, Representative Lawlor and members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Anne Stanback, and I am the Executive Director of Love Makes a Family, the Connecticut organization whose mission has been to change our state laws so that loving, committed same-sex couples could legally marry.

After eight years, that day finally arrived on November 12th with the Supreme Court's ruling in *Kerrigan*.

Today I am here to speak in support SB 899, *An Act Implementing the Guarantee of Equal Protections Under the Constitution of the State for Same-Sex Couples*.

There are lawyers testifying who can speak to this bill's technical elements better than I can. My role today is a simpler one. I am here to say thank you to this committee for moving the dialogue around marriage equality forward in our state. I am also here to speak on behalf of the 20,000+ members of Love Makes a Family who support the *Kerrigan* decision. I can sum up their sentiments using the words from my favorite sign at the "Decision Day" victory rally in October: "PROUD OF MY STATE."

Because that *is* the feeling. People are proud. And people are supportive. When same-sex couples began to marry in Connecticut in November, there were no major protests. There was no backlash. That fact—combined with the results of two independent statewide polls* that indicated clear majority support for the Court's ruling—shows that this issue is settled in Connecticut. The bill being heard today will close this final chapter on the effort to end legal discrimination based on sexual orientation.

Marriage equality is the law in Connecticut and this bill won't make it any more legal. What it will do, however, is conform our state statutes to the *Kerrigan* ruling and clear up confusion that exists because of Connecticut's civil union law. It will also clarify issues related to recognition and remove demeaning language that was added as a compromise to ensure passage of the so-called "gay rights bill."

That language was insulting to many of us when it was added 18 years ago, and today it is simply unacceptable. The language made some legislators feel comfortable back in 1991, but all its talk of "not condoning homosexuality" and "not requiring the teaching of homosexuality as an acceptable lifestyle" had no legal impact then—and repealing it will have no legal impact now.

So why repeal the section at all? Because words matter, and the only thing the words referenced in Section 17 do is to demean gay people and our families. Our state has moved beyond that. The Court's majority in *Kerrigan* said as much, citing this language as an example of prejudice and "state-sponsored disapproval" of gay and lesbian people that is no longer acceptable.

In preparation for today's hearing, I looked back at my testimony from the first hearing the Judiciary Committee held on this issue back on March 16, 2001. I closed my remarks then with words which are just as appropriate today as they were 8 years and 10 days ago:

"What could possibly be wrong with making it easier for me take care of and be responsible for the person I have made a lifelong commitment to? What could possibly be wrong with allowing the same thing for the other couples here today? Marriage is about building stronger families. Building stronger families builds stronger communities, and that is a good thing for all of us."

Thank you.

* PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR MARRIAGE EQUALITY: A UCONN/Hartford Courant poll conducted the weekend following the *Kerrigan* court decision showed that a clear majority (53% to 42%) of Connecticut residents support letting same-sex couples marry. A second independent poll on December 17th by Quinnipiac University confirmed that majority support (52% to 39%).