

TESTIMONY OF SHARRON EMMONS AND MARY ROCHE SUPPORTING SB 899

First of all, we'd like to say that we are both pleased and proud to live in the State of Connecticut where our Supreme Court had the courage and integrity to do the right thing, albeit perhaps not the universally popular thing. To the Court we say 'Thank you.'

My partner Mary and I have been in a loving relationship for 10 years. We had our holy union ceremony, officiated over by an Episcopal priest on August 19, 2000, where we committed to each other in front of our families and friends. We applied for a marriage license at Middletown Town Hall in 2005 to bring the issue to the media and to people, and, of course, were denied. We had our civil union ceremony at Metropolitan Community Church of Hartford in 2006, with a few friends after Sunday service, and that day we gained the rights and protections that we never had before. And on August 19th of this year we will have our marriage ceremony. And it will be joyous and sacred, as were our other two moments. But this time it will be that much more special and that much more powerful, because we will have climbed the steps of those other ceremonies to get to that place that provides the dignity and the clarity that is understood and respected by all. Marriage.

For as committed as we've been to each other for these 10 years, knowing that we will soon call our relationship a marriage solidifies that relationship for us in a different way. There is that 'something extra' here that binds us together more firmly, that makes it feel more permanent. This right to marry brings us closer to the final step in the journey that we've been on for 10 years. While civil union was good in the protections it afforded us, it left us angry and feeling as though we had once again been given the back-handed compliment that said, "you can have something but not everything." Marriage was reserved for those "other" people, not for us. But now our relationship will finally be elevated to the same level as our neighbors, as our straight friends, as our parents. There is no greater joy in life than that – to just be able to have what others could always have had and that so many have taken for granted. With all due respect, you probably never realized how fortunate you are to have what we could never have until now.

The battle will wage on, in the other 48 states and at the federal level, and we will continue to be a part of it until all legislators at all levels realize that rights and protections guaranteed for anyone are good for everyone. But we are proud that Connecticut and its sister state Massachusetts have led the way thus far. Your signing into law this basic human right will be, once again, a demonstration of Connecticut's courage and integrity to do the right thing.