

TESTIMONY for Judiciary hearing – March 6, 2009

**YES to bills 899 and 1056**

**NO to bills 6573 and 6381**

I am proud to live in a state like Connecticut that recognizes the rights of all loving couples to demonstrate their commitment to each other by marrying. Same gender marriages in no way diminish the unions between a man and a woman, and every committed couple should have the same rights, responsibilities and benefits as every other couple. **SB 899** clarifies some important situations concerning conversion of civil unions to marriages, recognition of unions & marriages of people who move to CT and of CT couples who go to other states. I congratulate the CT General Assembly for ending discrimination and respecting the rights of all, and ask that you pass this clarifying legislation.

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Raised bill **1056**--- YES! One of the great things about the USA is our freedom of speech rights. This needs to extend to students as well as adults. Just because students are under the jurisdiction of teachers and administrators in many other respects does not mean that rights to free speech and expression do not apply to them. Let Connecticut be a leader (again) in affirming students' rights.

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I ask you, on the other hand NOT to pass **bill 6573**, which would compel DNA samples from individuals arrested for sexual offenses and offences committed against minors. People are arrested all the time for offenses that it turns out they did not commit, and in addition, charges are often made and then dropped in order to extract a plea bargain from the arrestee. Why should arrest be grounds for DNA testing? I thought that legislation was passed in 2008 to provide for DNA testing after conviction, rather than either at the arrest stage or at the time of release. If not, then it is covered by **SB 542**, which would include many types of crimes in which DNA evidence might convict or exonerate. Post-conviction timing preserves individual rights while helping to solve both cold and current cases. I do question, however, why A and B Misdemeanors are included. Moreover, I question whether Connecticut can handle the filing of all this information, which definitely would limit its usefulness.

**HB 6381** should be opposed because it allows for "reasonable force" to be used in collecting DNA samples; I'd like to know what is the definition of "reasonable force". You should never pass legislation containing such vague language that could allow for physical abuse.

*Sally Joughin*

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