

April 20, 2009

Senator Lawrence Bliss, Chair  
Joint Standing Committee of Judiciary Committee  
100 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333-0100

Representative Charles R. Priest, Chair  
Joint Standing Committee of Judiciary Committee  
100 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333-0100

Re: Support for LD 1020, An Act To End Discrimination in Civil  
Marriage and Affirm Religious Freedom

Dear Senator Bliss, Representative Priest, and other Members of the Judiciary  
Committee:

My parents were married for 65 years and I am one of their eleven children. I attended Catholic school for grades 1 to 12, and was an altar boy. My wife Susan comes from a Catholic family of 7 children. She and I have served as leaders of our local Catholic Church's Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults and taught Catholic Sunday School for many years. We participated in a Marriage Encounter sponsored by the Catholic Church.

Susan and I were married over 25 years ago in a Catholic Church, and our wedding vows began: "Jesus is the source of my love for you . . ." We moved to Maine because we thought it was the best place in the world to raise our four children.

I am a life-long student of the bible and religion. I am proud of many of the moral teachings of the Catholic Church and its excellent work to reduce poverty and disease and to overcome social and economic injustice. Two weeks ago I was proud to testify before this Committee, along with the Maine Catholic Church, as a supporter of a bill to protect family caregivers against discrimination.

One of the greatest Catholic scholars, Thomas Aquinas, taught that a good Catholic has an obligation to carefully study and consider the teachings of the Church, but that all moral decisions must be based on the individual's own, well-informed conscience. Although I agree with most of the moral teachings of the Catholic Church, my conscience leads me to disagree with some, including that married couples cannot use contraceptives and that women cannot serve in the leadership roles of priests or bishops.

The cornerstones of my life are God, family, justice and love. All four of these values lead me to strongly support LD 1020 ending discrimination against same-sex couples. The Bible teaches us that we are all equal in the eyes of God: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female: for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Galatians 3:28. Our gender is not what makes us a person of good character, or a good parent, or a good citizen, or a good follower of Jesus. So too, the gender of our romantic partner makes no difference.

Opponents of same-sex marriage rely mostly on "tradition," but Jesus firmly rejected tradition as a moral principle,<sup>1</sup> and instead taught that the two greatest commandments are to love God and to love one another.<sup>2</sup> American history teaches that tradition has often been the last excuse for blocking important moral advances.

Preventing same-sex couples from marrying is contrary to the teachings of Jesus, undermines the families of same-sex couples, perpetuates unjust and irrational discrimination and punishes loving couples for no good reason. The founding documents of both Maine and the United States are based on the equal rights of all humans, and being a follower of Jesus or a Catholic is also consistent with that core principle, supporting the equal right of same sex couples to marry.

Sincerely,

David G. Webbert  
Wayne, Maine 04284

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 15:3 ("And why do you transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition?"); Mark 7:9 (And he said to them: "You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God, in order to keep your tradition!").

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 22:36-40; Mark 12:28-31; Luke 26-28; John 13:34; 15:12, 17.