

Testimony in Support of LD 1020

Rabbi Susan Bulba Carvutto

I have served as the rabbi of Temple Beth El in Augusta for the past 12 years. We have just over 100 families. Of these at least 6 have members in committed same sex relationships. They are part of our sacred community, yet they do not have access to the same legal status as other families in our community. They have children who are part of our Hebrew School. Our synagogue is affiliated with the Union for Reform Judaism, the largest movement of Jews in this country. Our movement and our rabbis' conference, the Central Conference of American rabbis, both support the right of same sex couples to marry. Our movement follows the teaching of the Torah that every human being--gay or straight-- is made in God's image; and that it is wrong to oppress the stranger, the one who is different, for we were strangers in the land of Egypt. When Jews were dragged to concentration camps and gassed because we were perceived as subhuman by the Nazis, so were homosexuals. The passage of this bill will not force any clergy person, Jewish, Christian or Muslim to perform a same sex ceremony. It will not force any individual into a same sex relationship. It will bring those who have been excluded and oppressed into the fold, into the community of those who enjoy the legal rights and societal supports of marriage.