

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE NJ JUDICIARY COMMITTEE  
ON MARRIAGE EQUALITY**

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The 2006 Civil Union Act, the New Jersey legislature's response to the state Supreme Court ruling that homosexual and heterosexual couples must be treated equally, has proven to be deeply flawed. Many in our state have no idea what a 'civil union partner' is, but what is clear is that the term is not equated with 'spouse.' As a result, legal, psychological, and practical distinctions are drawn between the two that create harmful inequalities.

New Jersey's current laws also inhibit my church's ability to freely practice its faith. The Unitarian Universalist Church in Cherry Hill allows marriage by gay and lesbian couples, but those marriages are not recognized by the state. This gives preferential treatment to the marriages performed by some churches over others. The state's laws should be neutral, not benefiting some religions and penalizing others. I urge the legislature to create an equal legal framework and then let our state's churches, synagogues, and temples freely decide whom they wish to and do not wish to marry. The bill before the legislature includes provisions protecting this freedom.

Our nation's history has shown us that 'separate but equal' only creates separate, it does not create equal. The Garden State's trial run with civil unions should now be relegated to the history books. The time for true marriage equality is before us.