

**TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO LD1020, AN ACT TO END DISCRIMINATION IN CIVIL MARRIAGE AND
AFFIRM RELIGIOUS FREEDOM**

William C. Duncan
Marriage Law Foundation
April 22, 2009

Senator Bliss, Representative Priest, and members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is William Duncan, and I represent the Marriage Law Foundation. I am here today to testify in opposition to LD1020.

Portraying the issue of same-sex marriage as a matter of civil rights is an effective strategy because no one wants to be perceived as a bigot and the logic of the civil rights argument is that those who oppose redefining marriage are just that, bigots.

The analogy does not work, though. Laws banning interracial marriage had to be rejected because they imposed on the institution of marriage an unrelated idea—the odious notion that one race is superior to another. Redefining marriage as the union of any two people (as LD 1020 would do) constitutes an official government repudiation of the core public purpose of marriage—ensuring simultaneously that as many children as possible will have the opportunity to know and be raised by their own mother and father while encouraging those who can create children as part of their union to take responsibility for each other and the children they create. Even husbands and wives who don't have children advance this goal by providing mothers and fathers for children who are deprived of that opportunity (by adoption) and by not creating motherless and fatherless children in less stable relationships.

Individuals in same-sex relationships, along with all people married and unmarried, deserve dignity and fair treatment. Redefining marriage, however, is not the way to accomplish this goal. Marriage is a powerful social tool for encouraging and safeguarding a child's birthright of a mother and father. If this tool is fundamentally changed to accomplish a different purpose—giving government approbation to all kinds of adult relationships—it can no longer fulfill its child-centered purpose.

That is because the messages of same-sex marriage are: that mothers and fathers are interchangeable, that living in a motherless or fatherless home will have no effect on children, that endorsing these arrangements will have no effect on society, and that marriage is about nothing more than adult desires.

Although the Maine legislature will not have to give reasons for its vote, if it redefines marriage it will ultimately be ratifying the judgment of the Iowa Supreme Court that the idea that children need a mother and father is an outdated stereotype.

The definition of marriage is not about civil rights. It is a matter of civil responsibility—the responsibility our society has to affirm the dignity of all people without extinguishing the inheritance of future generations: their chance to inherit a culture where a child's birthright relationship with her own mother and father is respected and protected wherever possible.

Rejecting a redefinition of marriage would fulfill this responsibility.