Washington State Catholic Conference

Testimony
HB 1727 – Expanding rights and responsibilities for domestic partnerships
House Judiciary Committee
February 5, 2009

Chairperson Peterson and House Judiciary Committee, my name is Kim Sheley and I am testifying on behalf of the Washington State Catholic Conference (WSCC), which represents the Catholic Bishops of Washington State on public policy issues.

Sponsors of HB 1727 have publicly stated that this legislation is intended to extend existing marriage rights to same sex couples as a pathway to legalizing gay marriage in Washington State.

The public debate about extending benefits should not be confused with support for same-sex unions and must not lead to a deconstruction of the true meaning of marriage. The Catholic Church's support for the legal definition of marriage as the union between a man and woman is rooted in our belief that the state has a responsibility for the common good. To shift the focus of family away from the natural bearing and education of children by a mother and a father would destroy marriage's unique and irreplaceable contribution to the common good of society.

Church teaching on marriage between a man and woman should in no way be viewed as detracting from the dignity of and respect owed to each individual person. Unjust discrimination, intolerance or other mistreatment is contrary to Church teaching concerning the dignity of persons.

The Catholic Church places a very high value on marriage and opposes the expanded government sanction of domestic partnerships contained in HB 1727.

On behalf of the Washington State Catholic Conference, I thank you for your time today.

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