



## PRESS RELEASE

Founded in 1991, Equality Illinois is the state's oldest, largest and most effective organization advocating for the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Illinoisans.

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 23, 2013

#### **Equality Illinois Applauds Marriage Equality Endorsement by Top Immigrant Rights Group**

SPRINGFIELD – Today's endorsement of the freedom to marry by Illinois' major coalition on immigration issues is important recognition that all kinds of families are negatively impacted by government's denial of marriage to same-sex couples, according to Equality Illinois, the state's largest advocacy organization for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Illinoisans.

The endorsement by the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights comes at a key time as historic legislation is debated in both Washington and Springfield, said Bernard Cherkasov, CEO of Equality Illinois.

With Congress considering once-in-a-generation immigration reform, the ICIRR statement showcases why same-sex couples should not be so cavalierly dismissed by members of Congress, Cherkasov said.

"As the Illinois immigration coalition says, recognition of same-sex families should also extend to immigration laws," he said. "This is a rebuke to those who say that partial immigration reform is sufficient even if it affirmatively excludes gay and lesbian families. Family reunification is bedrock principle of our immigration laws. We're all in this together."

Meanwhile, the Illinois House of Representatives is getting ready to vote on the freedom to marry bill, and Equality Illinois calls on House members to consider this latest endorsement of marriage equality, adding to the chorus of support from all corners of the state and all walks of life.

"We applaud the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights for its commitment to all loving couples and the belief that they should be able to marry so their relationships are respected and their families are protected," Cherkasov said.

"We all must now work to translate that support for marriage equality to action by the Illinois House of Representatives before its May 31 summer recess," he added. "The time is now for the House to pass the Religious Freedom and Marriage Fairness Act."

The full statement by the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights follows:

## ICIRR Statement on Marriage Equality

As an organization dedicated to the full inclusion of all Americans, whether foreign-born or native-born, the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (ICIRR) supports marriage equality. ICIRR believes that full equality and civic participation should extend to recognition of all families, including those involving same-sex partnerships. Such recognition should extend to our immigration laws, our family laws, and to other areas of law that affect our families. While we recognize that there are differences of opinion within immigrant and faith-based communities regarding same-sex marriages, including among our members, the majority of our members - and therefore our organization - believe that a full respect for our state's and our nation's diversity demands that we not discriminate based on whom we love, and that we call upon an end to such discrimination in our local, state, and federal laws.

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