



**EQUALITY
ILLINOIS**

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

July 10, 2013

Illinois Religious Leaders Ask Court to Rule in Favor of Marriage Equality *"Tradition does not justify abrogating individuals' constitutional rights"*

CHICAGO – More than 200 religious leaders and faith communities today asked an Illinois circuit court judge to overturn the state's statute that prohibits same-sex marriages, arguing that religious doctrine should not be written into state law.

Authored by the law firm of Miller Shakman & Beem of Chicago on behalf of faith leaders across Illinois, the friend of the court brief states, "The views of some religions should not be imposed on others, enshrined in legal doctrine, or used to deny same-sex couples equal legal standing in the eyes of Illinois law. Tradition does not justify abrogating individuals' constitutional rights."

More than 200 religious leaders and faith communities throughout Illinois and representing many denominations signed onto the brief in support of a lawsuit pending before Circuit Court Judge Sophia Hall. Two suits, now consolidated into one, were filed last year by the ACLU of Illinois and Lambda Legal on behalf of same-sex couples who were denied Illinois marriage licenses.

The lawsuit is part of a dual-track legislative and judicial strategy of advocates for the freedom to marry. Equality Illinois and its allies will continue to pursue passage of the Religious Freedom and Marriage Fairness Act—which recognizes the inequality of denying lesbian and gay couples and their families equal access to marriage—in the Illinois General Assembly while also seeking the freedom to marry through the courts.

Earlier this year, the Catholic Conference of Illinois and several other faith organizations filed a brief asserting that legal recognition of same-sex marriages will compromise or threaten religious liberty. The new brief disputed the Catholic position, and stated that the opposite is true.

"Ending the legal discrimination prohibiting civil marriage for same-sex couples will not

force any religion to conduct or recognize same-sex unions against its religious beliefs. There is no monolithic religious opposition to marriage for same-sex couples," the faith leaders said, adding that many of their faiths, in fact, already perform them where the law allows.

The brief concludes: "The question before the Court is whether the state may continue to deny equal legal standing for same-sex couples by refusing them the honored legal status of 'marriage,' but instead relegating them to the separate and poorly understood 'civil union' category. This is a legal, not religious, question. Communities of faith are and will remain free to decide whether to solemnize marriages for same-sex couples. The views of some religions should not be imposed on others, enshrined in legal doctrine, or used to deny same-sex couples equal legal standing in the eyes of Illinois law."

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