

May 3, 2015

House Committee On Rules

Chair Representative Hoyle, and members of the committee,

My testimony is in opposition to HB 2478, which makes statutory changes to achieve gender neutral language with respect to legally recognized marriages.

This bill is pre-mature since the Supreme Court has heard the case of marriage and is expected to make a ruling in June. Should the Supreme Court rule that it is up to the states to define marriage, it will overturn the District Court ruling against Oregon's Constitution, which still states marriage is between a man and a woman. If the Supreme Court rules in favor of the Oregon Constitution, then there needs to be a discussion on if the state will continue to recognize same-sex marriages performed in other states and performed in the interim.

Some of the statutes listed in the bill does not make sense to change. Within a gay couple, there is still a husband and a wife. It may be two husbands or two wives as husband and wife reference is to male or female. Such redefinitions are not necessary and premature. Do all the changes support Oregon's Constitution should the Supreme Court rule in favor? For example, Section 67 already lists parent, a stepparent that would be either sex. Section 64 and 68 refers to costs of maternity, which still only applies to a woman regardless if the couple is two men.

There are a couple of sections that do make sense regardless of the Supreme Court's ruling that has to do with insurance since partners are recognized for coverage, and in cases of conviction (Section 65 and 66)

By getting ahead of the Supreme Court, the bill muddies the water as if everything was thrown in the pot whether it made sense or not. I strongly suggest that you hold this bill over to 2016 and see if the Supreme Court rules in favor of gender neutral marriages. Then take more care in looking at the changes and if they make sense.

Please vote no.

Donna Bleiler