



CONTACT:

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

John Kohlhepp, Campaign Manager, 217.502.4166
Bernard Cherkasov, Equality Illinois - 312.520.4919
Erik Roldan, Lambda Legal - 312.545.8140
Edwin C. Yohnka, ACLU of Illinois - 312.201.9740, x305
Anthony Martinez, The Civil Rights Agenda, 312.863.9632

Diverse Clergy and Faith Leaders Coalition Urges Illinois House to Pass Freedom to Marry During Veto Session

Broad interfaith coalition supports SB10, say “it’s a matter of conscience and justice”

SPRINGFIELD, IL – November 3, 2013 – With the Illinois General Assembly returning to Springfield beginning next week, over 300 Illinois clergy and faith leaders across Illinois banded together Sunday to express their support for the freedom to marry, signing onto an expanded open letter urging legislators to take action and to “accept our brothers and sisters and recognize that their relationships and families need equal recognition and protections.” Senate Bill 10 – the Religious Freedom and Marriage Fairness Act – won overwhelming, bipartisan passage in the Illinois Senate in February and currently awaits action in the House.

“We dedicate our lives to fostering faith and compassion, and we work daily to promote justice and fairness for all. Standing on these beliefs, we think that it is morally just to grant equal opportunities and responsibilities to loving, committed same-sex couples,” the coalition stated in a joint letter. “There can be no justification for the law treating people differently on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity.”

Additional supporters signing onto the letter include:

- Bishop Carlton Pearson – New Dimensions Church
- Rev. Dr. Cheryl B. Anderson – The United Methodist Church
- Pastor Jullian DeShazier – University Church United Church of Christ
- Rev. Dr. Damen Jones – First Baptist Church Berwyn

The open letter additionally explains how the Religious Freedom and Marriage Fairness Act guards the freedom of religion and would not require any faith institution to perform a union with which it disagrees.

“There are differences among our many religious traditions. Some recognize and bless same-sex unions, and some do not. The important thing is that the Religious Freedom and Marriage Fairness Act protects religious freedom and guarantees that all faiths will

decide which marriages should be consecrated and solemnized within their tradition,” the coalition’s letter states.

“As people of faith and as citizens of Illinois, we ask you to stand for freedom for all of our citizens and to support the freedom to marry. It’s not only a matter of equality – it’s a matter of conscience and justice,” the coalition’s letter concludes.

The clergy and faith leaders wrote the letter as individuals and not as representatives of their congregations.

A copy of the open letter is attached with this release. Information about the legislation is available at www.illinoisunites.org, along with information about how citizens can make their voices heard.

###

For additional information, contact Eric Herman at 773.405.8124.