



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **EQUALITY ILLINOIS HAILS INTRODUCTION OF BILL GUARANTEEING FULL MARRIAGE RIGHTS**

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CHICAGO – Equality Illinois, the state’s oldest and largest organization advocating for full equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people, applauds today’s filing of the Religious Freedom and Marriage Fairness Act by Representatives Greg Harris, Deborah Mell, and Kelly Cassidy.

Civil unions were an important intermediate step for the state. Bernard Cherkasov, CEO of Equality Illinois, says, however, the civil union law has already proven to have substantial weaknesses and falls short of full marriage equality for all loving and committed couples in Illinois.

“In following experiences of thousands of couples in civil unions over the past year, we confirmed what we always suspected to be true: that creating a separate institution to provide substantially the same rights did not add up to full equality under the law,” Cherkasov said. “A pharmacist who denied prescription pick-up to the patient’s civil union partner didn’t think it’s the same thing as marriage. A coroner who refused to issue a death certificate to civil union partner survivor did not think that civil unions are the same as marriage. Tax preparers, estate planners, employers and employees do not think that civil unions are the same as marriage. Separate is not equal. And we at Equality Illinois will not rest until gay and lesbian couples in every corner of the state - who are equal in love - are also equal in marriage.”

The bill comes on the heels of a ruling by the United States Court of Appeals for the 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit, holding that California’s denial of marriage in favor of domestic partnerships for same sex couples violated the U.S. Constitution.

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**Equality Illinois was founded in 1991 to secure, protect and defend full equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals. It is the state’s oldest and largest LGBT advocacy organization.**