



ARCHDIOCESE OF HARTFORD
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OFFICE OF
THE ARCHBISHOP

April 17, 2009

Dear Friends in Christ:

Last month, Catholics across Connecticut sent a strong message to the State Legislature: religious liberty must never be violated. Your swift and decisive action brought down Senate Bill 1098, which directly attacked the Catholic Church. Thank you most sincerely.

We need you to speak out again. We're facing another attack on our religious liberty. It is very serious and has to be stopped now.

The Judiciary Committee just sent Bill 899 to the State Senate. It is intended to implement the decision of the Connecticut Supreme Court legalizing same-sex marriage. As written, however, Bill 899 does not protect the First Amendment religious freedoms of individuals, religious organizations, and related societies.

When you contact the State Legislature about Bill 899, you may be told that it exempts clergy from having to officiate at same-sex weddings. But this bill does not guarantee the First Amendment rights of clergy, religious, and laity to practice their faith and operate their programs and services in accordance with their sincerely-held religious beliefs.

Because Bill 899 fails to provide full conscience protection, individuals and religious groups, particularly those that provide social and educational services, would be subject to civil harassment in the form of lawsuits. The State of Connecticut could try to coerce religious groups by giving grants, contracts, and licenses only to organizations that recognize and support same-sex marriage.

Our concerns are aggravated by related developments. Catholic Charities in the Archdiocese of Boston was forced to stop providing adoption services because it would not place children with same-sex couples. In Canada, the Knights of Columbus were fined for refusing to rent their hall for a same-sex wedding reception.

Bill 899 repeals the provision in current law that protects our children from government indoctrination in sexual lifestyles (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning, & Intersex) that are contrary to our beliefs. If you want to see how far this has already gone, visit the state's "Safe Harbor Project" website: www.ct.gov/shp.

Please contact your State Senator and Representative and ask them to vote "NO" on Senate Bill 899 as a violation of religious freedom. A list of Senators and Representatives is attached.

Thank you for defending the freedom of religion in the Constitution State!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ *Henry J. Mansell*

Most Reverend Henry J. Mansell
Archbishop of Hartford