







Jan. 2, 2013

Dear Illinois lawmakers:

Marriage is the lifelong, faithful union of one man and one woman, and the natural basis of the family.

Marriage is an institution fundamental to the well-being of society because a stable, loving marriage is the ideal environment for raising children. Through marriage, children grow up knowing that they were created through an act of intimate love. Marriage is also beneficial for adults as the ideal structure for men and women to live interdependently, recognizing the equal dignity, beauty and value of one another while also relying on each other's care and love. This is the natural order embracing the complementary physical, emotional and spiritual design of men and women.

As such, marriage in its true definition has long been respected and publicly supported in our society. As religious leaders in Illinois, we find the continued affirmation of marriage between a man and a woman essential. The ongoing attempts to alter the definition of marriage in civil law are full of serious danger, primarily by degrading the cultural understanding of marriage to an emotional bond between any two adults and by giving rise to a profound interference with the exercise of religious freedom for those persons and religious institutions whose faith and doctrine recognize the spiritual foundation of marriage as an authorized union between a man and a woman.

Some claim that as long as religious ministers are not forced to preside over same-sex "marriages" the principle of religious freedom, as secured in the U.S. Constitution's First Amendment is protected. However, the notion that the exercise of religious freedom is confined to the interior of churches, synagogues, temples or mosques or what one does on Holy Days is wrong and dangerous. The freedom of religion also extends to the ministries of religious organizations and to the individual conscience. Thus, the real peril: if marriage is redefined in civil law, individuals and religious organizations – regardless of deeply held beliefs – will be compelled to treat same-sex unions as the equivalent of marriage in their lives, ministries and operations. Compulsion of this nature is a violation of personal conscience and of religious liberty.

We implore all people of good will to protect marriage and religious freedom. The far-reaching consequences of redefining marriage in civil law extend throughout society and will directly impact religious freedom. Marriage and religious freedom are ideals integral to Illinois, and our elected leaders should do all they can to maintain these important principles.

Sincerely,

Most Reverend Edward K. Braxton Bishop of Catholic Diocese of Belleville Most Reverend R. Daniel Conlon Bishop of Roman Catholic Diocese of Joliet

**Council of Islamic Organizations of Greater Chicago** 

His Eminence Francis Cardinal George, O.M.I. Archbishop of Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago

Reverend Dan P. Gilbert President, Northern Illinois District The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod Most Reverend Daniel R. Jenky, C.S.C. Bishop of Roman Catholic Diocese of Peoria **Most Reverend David J. Malloy** 

Bishop of Roman Catholic Diocese of Rockford

Reverend Mark A. Miller President, Central Illinois District

The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod

The Right Reverend Juan Alberto Morales, OSB

Bishop of Quincy, Diocese of Quincy Anglican Church in North America The Right Reverend Wesley L. Nolden II Assistant Bishop of Quincy, Diocese of Quincy

Anglican Church in North America

Most Reverend Thomas John Paprocki

Bishop of Roman Catholic Diocese of Springfield-in-IL

Reverend Timothy J. Scharr

President, Southern Illinois District The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod

**Elder Jack Ward** 

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Pastors and members of the following churches also support this letter:

Generational Blessings Living Hope Missionary Baptist

Flossmoor, IL Chicago, IL

Philadelphia Missionary Baptist Bibleway Ministries

Chicago, IL Barrington, IL

Grace Temple Holiness Church The Father's House Zion Church of God

Chicago, IL Zion, IL

Total Christian Life Ministry Christian Life Church

Joliet, IL Mt. Prospect, IL

Empowerment Christian Center Darion Ministries Chicago, IL Oak Park, IL

Sacred Mountain International Christian Center Word of Grace Church

Chicago, IL Chicago, IL

**Evangelical Free Church of Sycamore**Living Waters Presbyterian Church

Sycamore, IL Addison, IL

The Purchased Church of God Chicagoland Church of God

Chicago, IL Lincolnwood, IL

NuWine Ministries Grace & Truth Apostolic Church

Westchester, IL Evanston, IL

Deliverance Outreach Center Polish Evangelical Fellowship

Chicago, IL Chicago, IL

Montrose Baptist Church Grace for Life Bible Church

Chicago, IL Naperville, IL

Rock of Ages Baptist Church Empowerment Christian Center

Maywood, IL Chicago, IL

**Immanuel United Church of Christ** Storm of the Spirit Church Chicago, IL Peotone, IL **Evangelical Free Church Christ Tabernacle Missionary Baptist Church** Crystal Lake, IL Chicago, IL **Tree of Life Outreach Ministries Worth Church of the Nazarene** Chicago, IL Worth, IL **Hopewell Primitive Baptist Church Peace of God Outreach** Chicago, IL Waukegan, IL **Pathway Christian Fellowship** Hosanna! Lutheran Church, LCMC Shorewood, IL St. Charles, IL **Prince of Peace Baptist Church Christian Tabernacle Church** Chicago, IL Roselle, IL First Baptist of Marengo **Alpha Baptist Church** Bolingbrook, IL Marengo, IL **Park Place Baptist Church Jesus Word Center** Montgomery, IL Chicago, IL **New Life Ministries** Jesus Journey Church Bartlett, IL Oak Park, IL **True Witness Deliverance Ministries Covenant Chapel Baptist Church** Chicago, IL Calumet City, IL H.E.L.P.S. Ministry First Saint Peter All Nation Church St. Charles, IL Chicago, IL **New Life Deliverance Church Cross & Crown** Chicago, IL Chicago, IL **Grace Chinese Christian Church** 

Greater Damascus Baptist Church Chicago, IL

Outreach Fellowship Christian Center East Dundee, IL

Life Changing International Ministries Chicago, IL

Bethesda Worship Center Des Plaines, IL Fox Valley Church of God

Skokie, IL

Geneva, IL

**Lively Hope Church of God in Christ Joliet, IL** 

########