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## **Catholic Conference of Illinois opposes redefinition of marriage legislation**

CHICAGO – The organization representing the state’s Catholic bishops today decried Senate passage of redefinition of marriage legislation, saying lawmakers are blatantly ignoring the institution’s key role in the foundation of society.

The Senate passed Senate Bill 10 on a 34-21 vote. The measure changes the current definition of marriage set in state law from “between a man and a woman” to “between 2 persons.”

Robert Gilligan, executive director of the Catholic Conference of Illinois, said Senate Bill 10 tosses aside the natural order of marriage as the complementary union of one man and one woman as the foundation for the family.

“Marriage joins a man and a woman in love to meet one another’s needs, to procreate and to raise children. This is the lifeblood of any human society,” Gilligan said. “This legislation tears at that definition with unknown consequences.”

Gilligan criticized the limited nature of religious freedom protections found in the legislation, noting the extremely limited conscience protections for religious organizations and the total lack of any such protections for individuals.

“We remain wary of government interference in the church’s ministry and structure,” Gilligan said. “We heard promises two years ago when civil unions were passed, and now Catholic Charities has been kicked out of its mission of serving children in foster care.”

Proponents of civil unions legislation two years ago promised during Senate floor debate that the social service mission of churches and faith-based organizations would not be affected. Within six months of civil unions becoming law, Catholic Charities in Illinois was barred from contracting with the state for foster care and adoption services for abandoned, neglected and abused children because of its religious beliefs.

Gilligan called upon House lawmakers to reject the measure.

“This legislation callously redefines a bedrock institution of our society and deteriorates the free exercise of religion in our state,” he said.

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*The Catholic Conference of Illinois was created in 1969 to serve as the public policy voice of the Illinois bishops and the six dioceses of the state: Belleville, Chicago, Joliet, Peoria, Rockford and Springfield-in Illinois.*