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April 9, 2013
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Statement from Most Reverend George J. Rassas Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Chicago Vicariate I

I was distressed and disappointed to read of Representative Ed Sullivan's change of heart concerning the legislative effort in Springfield to redefine marriage. Representative Sullivan had indicated for some time that he understood the gravity of this issue and was prepared to oppose Senate Bill 10.

Senate Bill 10 proposes to legally alter an institution that has been the bedrock of human society for much longer than our state has been in existence. This bill would declare that gender and gender differences play no unique role in marriage and the family and thereby undermine the norms that have defined marriage (i.e. gender, procreation) throughout human history and that are essential for healthy families and the common good of society.

Representative Sullivan mistakenly claims that Senate Bill 10 contains strong religious freedom protections. In fact, the bill allows only meager protections for what happens within the walls of select religious facilities. It offers very limited protections to religiously affiliated nonprofits, which are extensions of religious missions, or to individual conscience – the right of any man or woman to live by their own religious beliefs in every avenue of life. Every state that has redefined marriage by legislation has offered greater religious liberty protections than does Senate Bill 10.

There can be no doubt that this issue of marriage and sexuality are controversial and sensitive. We must be careful to respect all of our neighbors and ensure that none are being unjustly discriminated against. However, that safeguard does not rationalize the redefinition of marriage and the family. It is simply wrong to say otherwise.

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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.