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Catholic bishops of Illinois, Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod file brief supporting existing state marriage law

CHICAGO – The Catholic Conference of Illinois and the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod have filed an amicus brief in support of traditional marriage in a Cook County case challenging current state law defining marriage as between one man and one woman.

Same-sex couples from across the state in May filed suit against the Cook County clerk's office for refusing to grant them marriage licenses. Both the Illinois attorney general and the Cook County state's attorney have refused to defend current state law. County clerks from Tazewell and Effingham counties – Christie Webb and Kerry Hirtzel, respectively – successfully petitioned the court to intervene and defend state law.

The “friend-of-the-court” brief filed on Monday notes that the definition of marriage as the union of one man and one woman is rooted in the practices and values of Western culture, in addition to existing state law. The brief further notes that any attempt to redefine marriage should be decided by the people and their representatives in the state legislature.

“Marriage is a unique institution that bonds children with their biological mother and father,” said Robert Gilligan, executive director of the Catholic Conference of Illinois. “Any decision on the redefinition of marriage should be made by the people, not the courts.”

The Thomas More Society is representing Webb and Hirtzel, while the American Civil Liberties Union and Lambda Legal are representing the plaintiffs. Thomas More has filed a motion to dismiss the case, which has yet to be ruled on by Cook County Judge Sophia Hall.

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.