

**Testimony of Colette Hayward
In Support of the Maryland Religious Freedom
and Civil Marriage Protection Act**

Good afternoon, my name is Colette Hayward and I appear today on behalf of myself and my wife, Baltimore County Police Officer Margaret Selby. We thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today and share our story with you.

My wife Maggie and I have been together for nearly two decades. We have raised two grown daughters together and we are now spoiling three young grandchildren together. Though we wanted to get married at home, we traveled to Massachusetts in 2009 to get married surrounded by our closest friends and family.

I have my own small businesses which install solar electric panels and perform home renovations. Both Maggie and I are military veterans, having served our country honorably in the army.

For over 10 years, Maggie has been a Baltimore County Police Officer, patrolling the streets of Baltimore County to keep its residents safe from danger. She loves her job, and she is respected by her fellow officers. They threw a really fun celebration for us before our wedding. While she would never mention her commendations because she is so humble, I am proud to tell you that my wife Maggie is one of the most commended officers in the Department. She was named Officer of the Year in Essex three times, and she has received numerous awards for repeatedly putting her life on the line to shield others from danger. For example, when Maggie encountered a distraught armed man threatening to shoot a social worker visiting his home, she stepped in and successfully defused the situation, unarming the man and facilitating his immediate psychological treatment and the removal of 130 guns from the home. If you asked her, she would say that she was just doing what any of her fellow officers would do.

But despite our marriage and my wife's dedication to her job, the County Police Department is refusing to respect our marriage and to allow me to be on Maggie's spousal health insurance and to receive other protections. Right now, I can't get health insurance, but I know it hurts Maggie to think that I wouldn't have the safety net other spouses get when an officer falls in the line of duty. It's her job to be in dangerous situations and to protect the people of Baltimore County, but Maggie worries when she is on patrol about what would happen to me if something happens to her. We shouldn't have to think about these things, but we do.

Under Maryland law my out-of-state marriage *should* be recognized, but the County Police Department nonetheless is refusing to do so. They think it is perfectly acceptable to deny our family these benefits while giving them to non-gay employees and their spouses. Our marriage certificate is not treated the same by Baltimore County because we are both women. Maggie and I turned to lawyers at Lambda Legal to help us get spousal protections, but we should not have to fight to be treated like other married couples.

If Maryland allowed same-sex couples to marry none of this would be a problem. I am so proud of Maggie, our family, and the children we have raised together, and all of that stays the same

whether same-sex couples can marry in Maryland or not. But if something were to happen to Maggie in the line of duty, I wouldn't even receive the Maryland flag that other spouses receive, and that's not right.

So I am here today to implore you to do the right thing. Please vote for fairness for couples like Maggie and me.