



Testimony
SSB 5336 - Protecting individuals in domestic partnerships by granting certain rights and benefits.
House Judiciary Committee
March 16, 2007

Representative Lantz and members of the Committee, my name is Antonio Cube and I am testifying on behalf of the Washington State Catholic Conference, which represents the Catholic bishops of Washington State on public policy issues.

The Catholic Church upholds the dignity and respects the human rights of all people, yet we oppose SSB 5336 in its present form because it is too narrow in its applicability and leaves out many people in familial relationships that are legally prohibited from marrying.

As its title states SSB 5336 protects “individuals in domestic partnerships by granting certain rights and benefits,” but it does so by ignoring many others deserving of the protections and benefits the legislation provides. Indeed, SHB 5336 grants rights to only two types of domestic partnerships, yet fails to provide those same rights and protections to the many other kinds of bonded relationships that exist outside of the state’s marriage contract. For example, siblings and extended family members are specifically restricted from receiving the rights and benefits authorized by this bill.

For the Catholic Church, this exclusion is troubling because in many families, especially in immigrant, multi-language and racially diverse households, deeply caring family members often include adult children, grandparents, cousins, uncles and aunts. Multi-generational and extended family members in these loving relationships regularly face similar difficult decisions regarding visitation, healthcare, and end of life decisions. They should be entitled to the same packaging of benefits proposed for older couples or couples in same sex relationships.

If, as the intent of the bill states, it is truly to “further Washington’s interest in promoting family relationships and protecting family members during life crises,” then it is reasonable to extend to others the same protections that are granted to the two groups of couples named in this legislation.

We ask you to remember these people and families as you consider this bill and expand the focus of SSB 5336. Amending the legislation to make it inclusive of the many kinds of relationships deserving of familial support, and eliminating the restrictive categories in the bill is both reasonable and a matter of fairness.

Thank you for consideration of our request for support of the Miloscia amendment that makes this bill more inclusive.