TESTIMONY OF PROFESSOR ELLEN PERRIN, M.D., SUPPORTING H. 3677
Before the Joint Committee on the Judiciary October 23, 2003

I am Dr. Ellen Perrin, Professor of Pediatrics at Tufts-New England Medical Center, and the Director of the Division of Developmental-Behavioral Pediatrics and the Center for Children with Special Needs. I speak to you today as a recognized expert in child development. One of my areas of special expertise is in the development and well-being of children whose parents are gay or lesbian.

I have reviewed hundreds of articles and books, and written and published a good deal myself about what happens to children whose parents are the same sex. I am considered to be the pediatrician most expert in the country on this topic.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) published a report last year that summarized three decades of research on the well-being of children raised by gay or lesbian parents. I was its primary author. As a result he AAP adopted a formal policy which stated that children who grow up with "gay or lesbian parents fare as well in emotional, cognitive, social and sexual functioning as do children whose parents are heterosexual [underline added]. Children's optimal development appears to be influenced more by the nature of the relationships and interactions within the family unit than by the particular structural form it takes." The American Academy of Family Physicians last year also adopted a policy recommending its members "be supportive of legislation which promotes a safe and nurturing environment, including psychological and legal security, for all children, including those of adoptive parents, regardless of the parents' sexual orientation."

Recently, the Mass. Family Institute, Archbishop O'Malley and others have made public statements that children and the social institution of the family will be irreparably hurt if gay and lesbian parents are given full civil marriage rights and responsibilities as parents. I can tell you that this allegation has no valid scientific basis whatsoever. Absolutely no data have pointed to any risk to children as a result of growing up in a family with one or more gay parents. What we know for sure is that children thrive better in families that include two loving, responsible, and committed parents. We also know that conscientious and nurturing adults, whether they are men or women, heterosexual or homosexual, can be excellent parents. We have a lot of research as well as clinical experience that provide evidence for this fact.

As a pediatrician and an expert in child development, I take care of many children from many different family structures. That includes children whose parents are single or divorced, and parents who are opposite sexes and who are the same sex. I assure you that the stability and the permanence of the parents' relationship with each other is a huge factor in children's optimal development. A family that remains together and is protected by legal, financial, and social structures is the optimal context for children to grow up. Our society provides a set of stabilizing structures to children of married couples. They should not be withheld from families in which the parents are of the same gender. It just doesn't make sense for the state to put legal impediments in the way of parents who are committed to each other and to their children, making it harder for them to establish and maintain a permanent family unit.

I know that the welfare of children is central to your deliberations. If you believe that the legal protections of civil marriage contribute to stable homes and relationships for the children of heterosexual parents, then you should report favorably on H. 3677 because it would afford the children of same-sex parents an equal opportunity for stable homes and relationships, so central to all children's optimal development.