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**STATEMENT OF
INTEREST OF THE AMICUS CURIAE**

The Amici Curiae¹ are religious leaders representing a wide variety of religious organizations, faiths and traditions in the State of Rhode Island and across the country. While Amici represent the rich diversity of faiths and religious practices, Amici stand united in strongly supporting the right of married same-sex couples to have their marriages recognized on the same terms as the marriages of different-sex couples and the right of adult persons to enter into civil marriage with a partner of the same sex.

The Rhode Island Conference of the United Church of Christ is the regional setting of the United Church of Christ. The Conference was formed in 1806 by the Congregational Christian Churches in Rhode Island. It includes 33 churches, some of whom were organized during the Colonial period. The United Church of Christ has a rich heritage of standing in solidarity with those who are marginalized, oppressed and who suffer under the tyranny of injustice. Consistently, time has proved that these stands for justice are right for the church and society, and have included such issues as the abolition of slavery, women's rights, mixed race marriage, and the full civil rights of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons, which most recently includes the right to civil marriage for all couples without regard to gender.

Locally and nationally, the United Church of Christ (UCC) includes 5,400 U.S. Congregations and 1.2 million members. UCC congregations are part of the free church, non hierarchical, tradition, allowing its members to speak for themselves. Yet, the gathered church speaks to its membership and society on many issues, included those associated with gay and lesbian couples and families. Significantly, at the 25th General Synod of the UCC held in Atlanta

¹ See Appendix A for a complete list of individual and organizational amici. Organizational Statements of Interest are provided in the text below.

on July 4, 2005, delegates voted to adopt the resolution, "Equal Marriage Rights for All." This resolution, which passed with 80% of the UCC's 884 member General Synod voting in favor, caused the UCC's general Synod to become the first national setting of a mainline Christian denomination in the United States to fully endorse civil marriage equality. Additionally, the UCC has expressly allowed its ministers to perform religious marriage ceremonies for same-sex couples for well over a decade.

The Ballou Channing District of the Unitarian Universalist Association is the middle judicatory of the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations that covers Rhode Island. The District was formed in 1964 as the post-merger successor to regional Unitarian and Universalist judicatory entities. There are nine Unitarian Universalist congregations in Rhode Island. The Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations is a religious association of more than 1,000 Unitarian Universalist congregations in the United States. The Association is governed by an annual General Assembly during which, through a democratic process, resolutions are approved that guide and direct the Association's work related to social justice issues. The Association has adopted resolutions affirming the general principle of separation of church and state in 1963, 1973, 1985, 2007 and specific resolutions and policies concerning the rights of gay and lesbian people in 1970, 1973, 1980, 1984, 1987, 1992, 1993, 1997, 2007 and two specifically in support of civil marriage rights for gay and lesbian people in 1996 and 2002. Consistent with its long history of caring and support for the civil rights of lesbian and gay people, the UUA expressly provides that its clergy and congregations may celebrate the religious marriages of same-sex couples.

That the UUA and the UCC traditions both support equally marriage rights for same-sex couples is particularly noteworthy since each traces its history to New England.

Recognizing the historical, statutory and, indeed, constitutionally required differentiation of civil and religious marriage, Amici submit this brief to counter any suggestion from other amici -- particularly Bishop Tobin and the Beckett Fund for Religious Liberty -- that the Chambers-Ormiston marriage must not be recognized in order to protect particular or prevailing religious traditions or ideological beliefs. Religious diversity on the question of marriage rights for same-sex couples unequivocally exists. The briefs submitted in this matter to date do not present an accurate picture of where religious faith communities in Rhode Island stand on the question of marriage for same-sex couples. Moreover, notwithstanding the views espoused by Bishop Tobin and the Beckett Fund, religious diversity on this question will continue to exist even if the Court were to recognize this marriage of a same-sex couple. Existing legal principles -- applied in the ordinary course -- will support the on-going diversity of religious viewpoints without impinging upon religious freedom, and the arguments advanced by Bishop Tobin and the Beckett Fund to the contrary should be rejected by this Court to the extent they are even relevant to the pending certified question.

POINTS

I. AMICI URGE THIS COURT TO RECOGNIZE AND RESPECT THE LEGAL MARRIAGES OF SAME-SEX COUPLES.

Amici support this Court's consideration of this matter and urge the Court to grant the relief the parties are seeking -- namely, recognition of their legal marriage. Amici consider this result appropriate for many reasons. First, the only question before the Court relates to the recognition of the marriages of same-sex couples licensed in other states, not whether Rhode Island does, will, or must issue marriage licenses. The parties in this case are real people who

have sought to access a specific legal process from the courts of their home state. This Court should ensure the access of all citizens, including gay and lesbian citizens, to justice.

Second, this matter relates to the recognition of civil marriage -- a status licensed by governmental entities, not the rites and rituals of individual communities of faith. This is entirely the province of civil law, and an appropriate matter for this Court to consider.

II. WIDE DIVERSITY OF RELIGIOUS OPINION EXISTS WITHIN RHODE ISLAND ON THE RECOGNITION OF SAME-SEX RELATIONSHIPS.

Bishop Tobin and the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty each submitted a brief in this matter, arguing against the licensing of marriages for same-sex couples. Setting aside the fact that this matter concerns marriage recognition rather than marriage licensing, these briefs -- especially in combination -- present a false picture of where religious entities in Rhode Island stand on questions relating to the marriages of same-sex couples. Simply put, Bishop Tobin and the Becket Fund do not represent the only faith-based position on this matter.

On the contrary, within Rhode Island's religious communities, many support granting full respect and recognition to the committed relationships of same-sex couples. More than 100 religious leaders representing a diverse group of religious traditions have signed the "Declaration of Religious Support for Same-Gender Marriage in the State of Rhode Island" ("Declaration"), attached hereto as Appendix B. This Declaration demonstrates the support of a wide cross-section of Rhode Island clergy for recognizing the marriages of same-sex couples, stating, in pertinent part:

As leaders in faith communities we know there is a diversity of religious voices and interpretation of historical texts on many matters including sexuality, sexual expression and relationships. We affirm the right of freedom of conscience and differing perspectives of religious traditions in the matter of same gender marriage. But, with the many diverse, nuanced and multilayered interpretations and teaching of sacred texts we firmly believe it is improper for the state, and those who hold civic public office, to impose on society any theological position.

We call upon the state officials to remember that Rhode Island was founded by Roger Williams as a community open to religious diversity. We assert it is the state's responsibility to remain theologically neutral when in discussion about defining civil rights, relationships and responsibilities.

As people of faith we understand the great religious texts and their interpretation by wise elders to say that marriage is the sanctified commitment between two people, and the gender of the individuals is not the determining condition of such union.

See Declaration, Appendix B.

The signatories to this Declaration seek to counter the incorrect (and yet often commonly-held) view that civil marriages for same-sex couples contravenes all religious principles. These signatories demonstrate the diversity of religious viewpoints by showing that many traditions embrace their lesbian and gay members and join them in the quest for equality. In light of these principles, Amici urge this Court to respect the valid marriage of the parties.

III. STATUTORY AND CONSTITUTIONAL PROTECTIONS ALREADY EXIST TO ADDRESS ANY CONFLICTS BETWEEN CIVIL LAWS AND CLAIMS OF FREE EXERCISE OF RELIGION.

The assertions of some amici that recognizing the marriages of same-sex couples will somehow infringe the religious freedom of faith communities and institutions completely miss the mark. See, e.g., Brief Amicus Curiae of the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty ("Becket Fund Brief");² Brief Amicus Curiae for The Most Reverend Thomas J. Tobin, D.D., Bishop of Providence ("Tobin Brief") at 7-8.³ Such suggestions amount to bald fear mongering in light of

² Though initially recognizing the bounds of the certified question as being about recognizing marriages contracted in another state, see Becket Fund Brief at vi, the entirety of the analysis offered by the Becket Fund brief conflates the question of recognition with the question of the licensing of the marriages of same-sex couples—a matter in no way presented in this case.

³ Though the crux of the legal argument set forth by the Tobin Brief addresses this Court's questions about Full Faith and Credit and the federal Defense of Marriage Act, the Tobin Brief's statement of the Interest of Amicus Curiae makes assertions about the impact of a ruling recognizing the marriages of same-sex couples on Bishop Tobin's ability to speak against such

existing legal principles, at both constitutional and statutory levels, designed to address any potential conflicts between civil laws and a religious community's practices. The lawsuits and restrictions about which these amici warn have, in most instances, nothing to do with marriage regulation and more to do with long-standing objections to the legal protections extended to gay and lesbian citizens in society at large. To the extent they do raise questions about the future, those questions will be resolved by well-established doctrines developed over decades of anti-discrimination law and constitutional jurisprudence. Granting appropriate recognition to the legal marriages entered into by same-sex couples would in no way alter or undermine that existing legal framework

A. The Objections of the Becket Fund Have Nothing To Do with Marriage Recognition.

Fundamentally, the arguments of the Becket Fund Brief are not really about the marriages of same-sex couples. Instead, their complaints stem from the existence of sexual orientation anti-discrimination laws, and from the application of constitutional principles preventing governmental preferential treatment of religious organizations. Specifically, they raise unfounded concerns that extending legal recognition to the marriages of same-sex couples will result in civil suits against religious institutions that refuse to respect those marriages under anti-discrimination laws and hate crimes laws, as well as in the loss of government benefits by such religious entities.

Whether Rhode Island recognizes the marriages of same-sex couples has no bearing on any of these matters. Litigation about the application of anti-discrimination laws to religious organizations and lawsuits challenging instances of preferential treatment of religious

recognition, and prevent such recognition within the church. These assertions are addressed infra.

organizations by government entities have been taking place for decades. The very cases the Becket Fund Brief cites provide ample evidence of this, originating well before any legal status was available in any state for same-sex couples. These kinds of cases will continue regardless of whether Rhode Island respects the marriages of same-sex couples and illustrate that the law already has a means of addressing these cases. The concerns raised by the Becket Fund Brief really amount to an argument that religious organizations should be exempt from anti-discrimination laws writ large, because recognition of the marriages of same-sex couples would mark no change in the operation of Rhode Island's anti-discrimination laws as they relate to religious entities. If any conflict exists between those laws and religious practice, its existence stems from the protections based on sexual orientation themselves, *i.e.* G.L. 1956 § 28-5-5 et seq., rather than from this Court's determinations about the recognition of these parties' marriage.

B. Respecting the Marriages of Same-Sex Couples Will In No Way Erode Existing Constitutional Protections For Religious Beliefs.

It is a bedrock principle of our law that freedom of belief is absolute. Rhode Island citizens have an unmitigated right to hold religious and moral beliefs in favor of or against the recognition of gay and lesbian relationships and families. See *In re Palmer*, 120 R.I. 250, 254 (1978) ("the freedom to hold religious beliefs and opinions is absolute"). In addition to the protections granted under art. I, § 3 of Rhode Island's Constitution, the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution protects the right of an individual to believe as she chooses and to freely express those beliefs. See *Employment Div., Dep't of Human Res. of Or. v. Smith*, 494 U.S. 872, 877 (1990). As the U.S. Supreme Court made clear long ago, the government cannot compel citizens to affirm any particular belief:

If there is any fixed star in our constitutional constellation, it is that no official, high or petty, can prescribe what shall be orthodox in politics, nationalism, religion, or other matters of opinion or force citizens to confess by word or act their faith therein.

W. Va. State Bd. of Educ. v. Barnette, 319 U.S. 624, 642 (1943) (holding that school authorities could not compel the flag salute and pledge of allegiance).

Thus, whatever this Court concludes, no person or community of faith can be compelled to believe anything in particular, whether pro or con, about same-sex couples or their families. Nothing this Court does to recognize the marriages of same-sex couples will regulate the beliefs of those who oppose legal rights for gay people, or single out any particular belief for adverse treatment. Accordingly, the recognition of the marriages of gay and lesbian couples would work no legal hardship on those who fervently oppose that action.⁴

C. Constitutional and Statutory Provisions Exist to Protect The Free Exercise of Religion Against Improper Regulation.

The possibility of discord between law and religion only arises when “the freedom to act in harmony with [] religious beliefs and opinions” confronts “state regulation where such restriction serves the public interest by promoting public health and safety or preserving order.” Palmer, 120 R.I. at 254 (emphasis added). Despite the dire warnings of certain amici, however, constitutional and statutory safeguards exist to address and sort out those points of intersection.

⁴ Assertions that hate crimes laws could be used to infringe religious speech on those beliefs are plainly unfounded in light of both constitutional protections for religious freedom and speech, and the plain terms of the hate crimes laws themselves. Furthermore, the Becket Fund Brief’s suggestion that religious speakers were arrested simply for “peacefully opposing gay rights in public,” Becket Fund Brief at 8-9, is a patent mischaracterization. In Startzell v. City of Phila., 2007 WL 172400, at *6 (E.D. Pa. 2007), the plaintiffs were arrested for disorderly conduct after they aggressively confronted volunteers at a gay pride festival in Philadelphia. When they subsequently sued the city for violating their free speech rights, the court explicitly found that their actions were “not peaceful.” Id. at *11 (emphasis added). In fact, “the objective facts available to the civil officers policing OutFest at the time of plaintiffs’ arrest provided a basis for arresting plaintiffs for disorderly conduct, failing to disperse, and obstructing a highway.” Id. at *15.

The Rhode Island Constitution protects the rights of religious people in plain terms.

Section three of art. I declares:

that every person shall be free to worship God according to the dictates of such person's conscience, and to profess and by argument to maintain such person's opinion in matters of religion; and that the same shall in no wise diminish, enlarge, or affect the civil capacity of any person.

R.I. Const. art. I, § 3. Echoing and augmenting the similar promises of the First Amendment, this provision prevents unwarranted incursions by the state into religious practice. As this Court has made clear, when a person's religious practice runs into state regulation,

[w]e must then accommodate the right to exercise the religious freedoms safeguarded by the first amendment with the right of the state to regulate these individual freedoms for the sake of societal interests. The problem is one of balance and degree the courts are called upon to determine when the societal interest becomes so important as to justify an incursion by the state into religious activity that is otherwise protected by the free exercise clause of the first amendment.

Palmer, 120 R.I. at 254. These same principles would apply any time a court had to consider a claim by a religious entity that the recognition of a validly married same-sex couple's legal relationship would somehow infringe that entity's religious freedom.

1. Principles of Non-Discrimination Can Coexist with Religious Freedom.

Specifically with regard to any tension between anti-discrimination laws and religious free exercise claims, recognizing the marriages of same-sex couples would not effect any fundamental changes. Amici imply that enforcing anti-discrimination laws against employers with religious convictions will somehow provide lesbians and gay men new or expanded protection. See, e.g., Beckett Fund Brief at 2-4 (arguing that the recognition of the Chambers-Ormiston marriage for purposes of divorce will force -- by virtue of the state's nondiscrimination

laws -- all employers to provide equal insurance benefits to all married couples).⁵ In fact, however, a long history exists of harmonizing free exercise rights and employment laws in this country, both under constitutional principles and explicit statutory exemptions for religious institutions. “Congress has created, and the high court has resolved, similar conflicts between employment law and religious beliefs . . . ” Catholic Charities of Sacramento v. Superior Court, 85 P.3d 67, 77 (Cal. 2004) (citing Tony and Susan Alamo Foundation v. Sec’y of Labor, 471 U.S. 290, 303-306 (1985) (religious organization must comply with federal minimum wage laws); United States v. Lee, 455 U.S. 252, 256-261 (1982) (Amish employer must pay Social Security and unemployment taxes)). Requests by religious entities to be exempt from Rhode Island’s sexual orientation anti-discrimination laws would raise no new principles or problems for which courts in these other contexts have not provided sufficient guidance for resolving any disputes.

Further, the Legislature has, by statute, already made policy decisions on the proper accommodation of religious practice. For example, Rhode Island’s anti-discrimination laws themselves protect against the potential for conflict. They explicitly exempt from the category of employers to whom the laws apply “a religious corporation, association, educational institution, or society with respect to the employment of individuals of its religion to perform work connected with the carrying on of its activities.” G. L. 1956 § 28-5-6 (7)(ii).⁶ They exempt

⁵ The Tobin Brief, at 6, also suggests that religious entities will be forced to recognize the relationships of same-sex couples, but the cases on which it relies come from Canadian tribunals and are therefore inapposite to the application of the established balancing principles established under American law.

⁶ This exemption mirrors the “ministerial exception” to Title VII found by a variety of federal courts. See, e.g., Catholic Charities of Sacramento v. Superior Court, 85 P.3d 67, 78 (Cal. 2004) (“Although the United States Supreme Court has not spoken on the ministerial exception, the lower federal courts have widely embraced it, applying it both to ministers and to a variety of nonordained employees with duties functionally equivalent to those of ministers.”); Alicea-

religious institutions from the prohibition of housing discrimination under certain circumstances, making clear that

Nothing in this chapter shall prohibit a religious organization, association, or society or any nonprofit institution or organization operated, supervised, or controlled by or in conjunction with a religious organization, association, or society from limiting the sale, rental, or occupancy of a dwelling which it owns or operates for other than commercial purposes to persons of the same religion or from giving preference to those persons unless membership in the religion is restricted on account of sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, race, color, or national origin or disability.

G.L. 1956 § 34-37-4.2(a). Added to the baseline protections provided by the constitutional provisions discussed supra, these statutory protections provide a clear framework for addressing the proper bounds of the anti-discrimination laws' proper application to religious entities.

2. Courts Already Navigate the Application of Constitutional Principles to the Availability of Government Resources and Advantages to Religious Entities.

With regard to the alleged losses of special government privileges about which the Becket Fund Brief warns, those assertions are completely unrelated to the legal recognition of the marriages of same-sex couples, and the cases cited again illustrate an existing framework for dealing with conflict. Generally speaking, these cases stand for the principles that 1) the government can require compliance with anti-discrimination principles by those with whom the government contracts or to whom the government provides funding, see, e.g., Catholic Charities of Maine v. City of Portland, 304 F. Supp. 2d 77 (D. Me. 2004) (Portland may condition receipt of municipal funding on provision of domestic partner benefits); and 2) the government is not required

Hernandez v. Catholic Bishop of Chic., 320 F.3d 698, 700-04 (7th Cir. 2003) (concluding that Hispanic communications manager for Archdiocese of Chicago was ministerial employee where she bore responsibility for "shaping the message that the Church presented to the Hispanic community"); E.E.O.C. v. Roman Catholic Diocese of Raleigh, N.C., 213 F.3d 795, 802-05 (4th Cir. 2000) (finding cathedral choir director required to assist in planning liturgies to be ministerial employee); E.E.O.C. v. Catholic Univ. of America, 83 F.3d 455, 461 (D.C. Cir. 1996) (holding that professor of canon law at religious university was ministerial employee).

to give special privileges to those who may be constitutionally permitted to engage in discriminatory conduct. See, e.g., Boy Scouts of America v. Wyman, 335 F.3d 80 (2d Cir. 2003) (though an organization may be constitutionally allowed to discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation, the State of Connecticut does not have to facilitate that discrimination by including them in the state employees' charitable campaign). In each of these contexts, the courts addressed the interactions of constitutional protections, religious freedom, and anti-discrimination principles, and found their way to a resolution. Courts confronted with similar interactions relating to the recognition of the marriages of same-sex couples will be able to follow the course these previous courts have laid out.

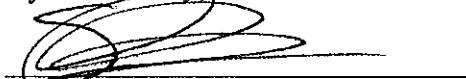
IV. CONCLUSION

For the foregoing reasons, amici respectfully request that this Court answer the certified question in the affirmative, and recognize the valid marriages of same-sex couples lawfully entered into in another jurisdiction.

Respectfully Submitted,

AMICUS CURIAE RELIGIOUS
ORGANIZATIONS & CLERGY

By its attorney,



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5878

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Appendix A

Appendix A

Religious Organizations and Clergy Members Constituting Amici Curiae

Religious Organizations

Rhode Island Conference
United Church of Christ

Ballou Channing District
Unitarian Universalist Association

Clergy

Rev. Dr. Charles P. Barnes
Conference Minister
Rhode Island Conference
United Church of Christ

Rev. William P. Zelazny
District Executive
Ballou Channing District
Unitarian Universalist Association

Rev. Jonathan Almond
Pastor
Mathewson Street
United Methodist Church
Providence

William Bartels, Ph.D.
University of Rhode Island
Ministerial Standing
United Church of Christ

Rev. Dr. Diane Christopherson
Interim Pastor
Beneficent Congregational
United Church of Christ
Providence

Rev. Dr. Duane Clinker
Pastor
Open Table of Christ United Methodist Church*
Providence

Rev. Eugene T. Dyszlewski
Chairperson of the Rhode Island Religious Coalition for Marriage Equality
Pastor
Riverside Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
East Providence

Rev. Dr. Barry R. Fleet
Edgewood Church
United Church of Christ
Cranston

Rev. Amy Bowden Freedman
Unitarian Universalist Minister
Newport

Betsy Aldrich Garland
Minister of Administration and Visitation
Beneficent Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
Providence

Rev. Anne Grant
Minister (Retired)
United Methodist Church
Providence

The Rev. Janice L. Grinnell
Deacon in Episcopal Church
Portsmouth

Rabbi Leslie Y. Gutterman
Temple Beth El*
Providence

Ruth Hainsworth, C.M.C.E., C.A.E.
Minister of Christian Education
United Church of Christ
Rumford

Rabbi Andrew F. Klein
Temple Habonim*
Barrington

Rev. Dennis R. Knight
Pastor Emeritus Pakachoag Church
United Church of Christ
Warwick

Rev. Jan Knost
Unitarian Universalist Minister
Charlestown

Rabbi Sarah E. Mack
Temple Beth El*
Providence

Rev. Cecelia Perry
Episcopal Priest
St. Michael's Episcopal Church
Bristol

Cantor Judith Seplowin
Temple Beth El*
Providence

Rev. Caroline Patterson
Member Central Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
Providence

Rev. Linda A. Shevlin
United Methodist
Cumberland

Rev. Robert Spalding
President
Rhode Island Conference
United Church of Christ
Pastor
Hope Congregational Church
East Providence

Rabbi Peter W. Stein
Temple Sinai*
Cranston

Rev. Dr. Harry Sterling
United Church of Christ
Prudence Island

Rev. William A. Sterrett
Pastor
Amicable Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
Tiverton

Rev. Richard H. Taylor
Pastor Emeritus
Beneficent Congregational U.C.C.
United Church of Christ
Providence

Rev. Joy Utter
Pastor
Seekonk Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
Kingston

*Congregation listed for identification purposes only.

Appendix B

Declaration of Religious Support for Same-Gender Marriage in the State of Rhode Island

As religious leaders from various faith traditions we come together to assert:

- The most fundamental human need is the supportive love of other human beings, and that love is demonstrated in many ways
- The arc of God's universe is toward justice, and we are called from out of our faith to pursue civil rights and fairness for all people
- The Divine, known by many names, does not ever side with expressions of hate or acts of discrimination
- The misuse of sacred texts or traditions to deny justice is wrong
- The freedom of religious belief and practice is paramount for a solid and healthy society
- The individuals entrusted with civic authority should not impose their personal religious beliefs, or any one interpretation of religious beliefs, on society as a whole, nor use them to deny rights to peoples

As leaders in faith communities we know there is a diversity of religious voices and interpretation of historical texts on many matters including sexuality, sexual expression and relationships. We affirm the right of freedom of conscience and differing perspectives of religious traditions in the matter of same gender marriage. But, with the many diverse, nuanced and multilayered interpretations and teaching of sacred texts we firmly believe it is improper for the state, and those who hold civic public office, to impose on society any theological position. We call upon the state officials to remember that Rhode Island was founded by Roger Williams as a community open to religious diversity. We assert it

is the state's responsibility to remain theologically neutral when in discussion about defining civil rights, relationships and responsibilities.

As people of faith we understand the great religious texts and their interpretation by wise elders to say that marriage is the sanctified commitment between two people, and the gender of the individuals is not the determining condition of such union.

As religious people we are in pain when we see the emotional hurt, spiritual distress and social damage the denial of marriage has on individuals, and the harm to the welfare of families we know and love in our congregations and religious assemblies.

Furthermore, we remind the legislators and the people of this state that civil marriage is a legal construct.

Therefore we call upon the legislators of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations to permit the civil marriage of same-gendered individuals, recognizing and affirm the stipulation that the no religious tradition be required to officiate or bless same gender-marriage.

Further, we commit ourselves to taking public action to provide education and support in the service of the right and freedom to marry

by individuals of the same gender, as well as, by those of opposite genders.

The above Declaration was signed by 100 Religious leaders from various faith communities in Rhode Island.

**RELIGIOUS LEADERS SUPPORTING THE PETITION:
“Declaration of Religious Support for Same-Gender Marriage
in the State of Rhode Island”**

Rev. Mary Aberg, First Congregational Church in Bristol, United Church of Christ, Bristol
Ethan Adler, Judaism, Cranston, RI

Rev. Jonathan R. Almond, Mathewson Street United Methodist Church, Providence
Nora Almond, Mathewson Street United Methodist Church, Providence

Rev. Nan L. Baker, Newport Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, Newport
Rev. A. Ralph Barlow, Pastor Emeritus Beneficent Congregational Church, United Church of Christ,
Providence, Residence: Lincoln

The Rev. Alcide Barnaby, Jr. +, Rector of St. James Episcopal Church, North Providence
Rev. Charles P. Barnes, Conference Minister, Rhode Island Conference of the United Church of Christ,
Pawtucket

William J. Bartels, Ph.D., Philosophy Department, University of Rhode Island, Ministerial
Standing in the
United Church of Christ, South Kingstown

Pastor Lawrence Bernier, Riverpoint Congregational Church, National Association of
Congregational
Christian Churches, West Warwick

Rev. Jeannette Lee Bessinger, Interfaith Minister, Newport

Rev. Murray Blackadar, Presbyterian Church U.S.A., Providence

Pastor Juliet Bongfeldt, Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd, Kingston

Rev. Amy Bowden Freedman, Unitarian Universalist, Newport

Rev. Raymond H. Bradley, Pastor Emeritus Riverside Congregational Church, United Church of Christ,
East Providence, Residence: Wakefield

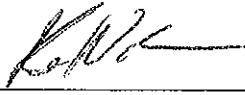
The Rev. Robert T. Brooks, Grace Episcopal Church, Providence
 Diana Burdett, Eastern Regional Organizer for Justice and Peace Action Network, United
 Church of Christ, Saunderstown
 Rev. Gregory D. Carpenter, United Methodist, Providence
 Rev. Ellen Casey, United Methodist, Greene
 The Rev. Dr. Diane Christopherson, Interim Pastor, Beneficent Congregational Church United
 Church
 of Christ, Providence
 Rev. Duane Clinker, Pastor Open Table of Christ, United Methodist Church, Providence and
 Warwick.
 Rev. Janet Cooper Nelson, United Church of Christ, Providence
 Rev. Sue Crowninshield, Episcopal clergy, Residence: Middletown
 Rev. Richard Dannenfelser, Presbyterian Church U.S. A., East Providence
 The Rev. Lark d'Helen, Spiritual Care – Newport Hospital, Residence: Middletown
 Rev. Dr. William E. Downey, United Church of Christ Retired Missionary to the Evangelical
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