

**William Ray
Odenton, Maryland**

**Testimony in Favor of Senate Bill 290:
SUPPORT Religious Freedom and Civil Marriage Protection Act**

**Testimony in Opposition to Senate Bill 169:
OPPOSE Marriage Protection Act**

Good afternoon, Members of the Committee. My name is William Ray of Odenton. I am a retired Professor from the Peabody Conservatory of The Johns Hopkins University, and from Howard University, of Washington, DC.

My wife, Carrie, and I are parents of two sons, one of whom is gay. We love and respect both of our sons equally, and we want them both to be treated equally by our government. Gay or straight, we want both of them to be able to enjoy all of the rights our American constitution has promised. Civil marriage is one of those rights. For that reason, I have to come to speak in support of Senate Bill 290 and against Senate Bill 169.

In 1943, I was drafted to participate in World War II, in what was, at that time, a segregated army. I was sent to Europe and the Philippines to fight for the civil rights of people in other countries that I did not have here at home.

It saddens me that decades later, in the 21st Century, our government in the state of Maryland and our federal government denies legal rights and protections to same-sex couples. It angers me that only one of my two children can have the stability and peace of mind of being legally married. It frustrates me that we know from numerous studies that people who are married live longer, healthier lives, and yet many of our elected officials would deny this to people just because they are gay or lesbian.

We have heard about the hundreds upon hundreds of rights and protections that accompany a marriage license, dealing with inheritance, taxes, healthcare, family leave, pensions, social security, immigration, property transfer, retirement, and joint parenting rights, to name a few that I understand.

But beyond just these civil rights, I'm here to say that allowing same-sex couples to legally marry is a matter of basic justice. By denying my son a legal relationship with the person he loves just because he is gay, the government is making his life harder, demoralizing him, devaluing him, denying him, stigmatizing him and his relationship and children, stripping away at his dignity – all the while taking his tax dollars.

Just as the days of segregation came to an end, so too will legal marriage discrimination on the basis of gender also come to an end. I ask you all, in fifteen years, when this chapter of Maryland history is long over and the history books are written, how will you look back on the legacy you left behind? Will you say you stood in the way of equal treatment under the law for all Maryland citizens, or will you say you stood up early and decisively for everything that is good and right about a just society?

Please grant my child the civil rights he righteously deserves as a resident of the United States of America. Please vote for the Religious Freedom and Civil Marriage Protection Act.