



ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON

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September 1, 2009

Mr. Errol R. Arthur
Chairman, District of Columbia Board of Elections and Ethics
441 4th Street, N.W., Suite 250 North
Washington, D.C. 20001

Dear Chairman Arthur,

On behalf of the Archdiocese of Washington, I write to express support for the initiative that is being filed with the Board of Elections and Ethics today. This initiative would allow voters a voice in the process to ensure that marriage in the District of Columbia continues to be legally defined as it always has been: between a man and a woman.

The Archdiocese of Washington includes 580,000 Catholics living in Washington, DC and neighboring Maryland counties. Catholic parishes, schools and ministries have been serving the needs of this area since before the District of Columbia was formed. It is out of our religious teaching and our long-standing commitment to serving the common good that we are compelled to write in support of this initiative to uphold marriage in the District of Columbia.

Originating in God's creative plan, marriage is rooted in natural law, which forms the foundation not only for church teaching, but also for civil law. Civil governments have recognized marriage throughout human history as between a man and a woman because of marriage's unique role in protecting the rights of children to have both a mother and a father and because it creates a stable and secure foundation for our society.

Marriage is more than just a union of two people who love each other and are committed to each other. It is reserved for man and woman because of their complementarity and, thus, unique ability to create and then nurture children with the different gifts that men and women offer. This definition has remained unchanged throughout time.

Recent efforts to change this historically and fundamentally essential institution by redefining it without the input of the electorate is unjust and makes this initiative necessary. We respectfully request your favorable action on the initiative.

Sincerely yours,

Most Reverend Barry C. Knestout
Auxiliary Bishop and Vicar General