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STATEMENT ON THE REPEAL OF THE 1913 MARRIAGE RESIDENCY LAW

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The Massachusetts legislature is considering Senate 800, An Act Concerning Marriage. This bill would expand access to marriage licenses in the Commonwealth to same-sex couples living in other states that do not recognize same-sex marriage.

We, the Roman Catholic Bishops in Massachusetts, throughout the public debate on the definition of marriage in the Commonwealth, have repeatedly spoken in support of the traditional institution of marriage. Today, we reiterate our belief that marriage is a faithful, exclusive, lifelong union of a man and a woman joined in an intimate community of love and life. Across times, cultures and many different religious beliefs, marriage between a man and a woman is the foundation of the family and society. Marriage is a personal relationship with public significance.

The Supreme Judicial Court has redefined marriage in Massachusetts by allowing marriage licenses to be issued to same-sex couples. However, under a law enacted in 1913 and upheld recently as valid by the Supreme Judicial Court, same-sex couples from other states must prove that their home state also recognizes same-sex marriage before they can obtain a marriage license in Massachusetts.

Senate 800 would remove this requirement, and thus extend the threat of redefining marriage beyond our borders. If Senate 800 is enacted, residents from states that recognize only the union of a man and a woman as marriage could obtain a license in the Commonwealth, marry in Massachusetts, return home, and then file court challenges against the laws of their own states.

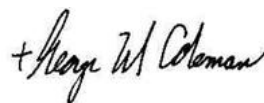
We, the Roman Catholic Bishops in Massachusetts, oppose Senate 800. Our legislature is attempting to impose the Supreme Judicial Court's definition of marriage upon other states. Such action endangers the principle of state sovereignty that gives each state the right to govern itself and enact its own laws. Massachusetts enjoys this same protection and rightly would not tolerate its violation by another state. Thus, we urge the legislature to respect the laws of other states by voting no on Senate 800.



Cardinal Seán P. O'Malley
Archdiocese of Boston



Most Rev. Timothy A. McDonnell
Diocese of Springfield



Most Rev. George W. Coleman
Diocese of Fall River



Most Rev. Robert J. McManus
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