

Letters of Testimony Against SB4770/4771
Marcy Epstein

My name is Dafna Eisbruch, I grew up in Ann Arbor and have fond memories of family trips spent camping at Michigan's spectacular state parks. As a teenager I volunteered as a Mackinac Island Girl Scout, participating in our tourism industry. I learned in school about Michigan's entrepreneurial history and I'm proud to brag that Woodward avenue in Detroit was the first road in the world to be paved with concrete. My parents pay the taxes that support Michigan's infrastructure and services that make this state a great place to live. I'm earning a biology degree at the University of Michigan so that I'll be able to do the same. Though many of my friends plan to move to Chicago or to the east coast after graduation, I love Michigan and I'd like to stay and build my career here. But if you pass laws that will prevent me from supporting a family here because I am a lesbian, I will be forced to leave, and with me will leave the next generation of contributors to Michigan's economy.

Sincerely,
Dafna Eisbruch
Ann Arbor

Dear Senators,

Do what is right for the people of this great state and for our overall economy and do NOT pass bills 4770 and 4771. My family and I have been proud Michiganders for generations, but we are not proud of the way this state treats its nontraditional families.

I am a straight married woman with dear friends who are part of stable and loving families who happen to be headed by parents of the same gender. These dedicated parents work hard, pay their taxes and above all, care deeply for the welfare of their children. Bills 4770 and 4771 will save the state very little money (if any) and cause great harm to many families and children. How can you justify this clearly immoral equation?

For those of you who think you have a financial justification, how much money will really be saved with these bills? Ask yourself, if these laws pass, how many parents and children who lose their medical benefits will wind up on public programs costing the state more? How many successful people will refuse to consider Michigan as a home for their businesses because our state appears meddling and overreaching? How many organizations will lose their competitive edge when offering a job, because they cannot offer benefits to the family of that one critical specialist. How many exceptional Michigan employees: doctors, researchers, business people and others will leave the state if they cannot get benefits for their children. Finally, how many talented people will refuse to consider moving to Michigan because our state appears backwards, behind the times and even cruel? And, to those of you who feel that you have a religious justification, I hope that you will revisit your scripture. Remember, "Love thy neighbor as thyself" and "do unto others as you would have them do unto you"? Do these phrases still have real meaning for you? If so, put your faith and your values into action by voting AGAINST these bills.

Please, do what is right for the families that depend upon these benefits and do is best for the future of this great state. I really do hope to be able to continue to be a proud Michigander.

Leora Druckman
Ann Arbor, MI

My name is Lee Sorkin. I am a senior studying Economics at the University of Michigan, and I am gay. I have always wanted to raise a family, and I have always dreamed of doing that in the state in which I myself was raised, Michigan. I love this state, but bills 4770 and 4771 make my dream of staying here harder to realize. Yes, these bills are targeted at all co-residents who aren't married, but let's be honest. They mostly affect same-sex couples. And while I agree that regaining fiscal responsibility is important, it cannot come at the expense of future prosperity. Young Michinganders are already flocking in droves to other states and better opportunities, why do you want to send away more? It breaks my heart that the state that I grew up in would turn its back on members of its community without considering other ways to cut its budget.

Lee Sorkin

Ann Arbor

Dear Representatives,

I am a Michigan native, (have lived here since I was three years old,) grew up in Traverse City, graduated from the University of Michigan and along with my husband and daughter, have made Ann Arbor, my home since 1990.

I own two businesses, an art gallery in the Northern Michigan town of Glen Arbor, and a new preschool in Ann Arbor. I am unable to get time off of work to attend this hearing so I hope you will read or hear my letter.

I have been extremely unhappy about the policies that Michigan has adopted towards gay and lesbian citizens. The constitutional amendment that effectively, bans gay marriage was a step in the wrong direction as was the Supreme Court ruling that, if my understanding is correct, rules that any institutions receiving state funding cannot offer insurance benefits to gay and lesbian couples. Our former

governor advised our state not to do this. As I remember, I believe she said something to the effect of being unfriendly towards gay and lesbians is not good for our Michigan cities revitalization efforts. Case studies, such as that of urban planner, Richard Florida's have strongly suggested that gay and lesbian populations are an ingredient in vital urban centers. It is a shame, I felt then, that people in Michigan think it is more important to dismiss different sexual orientations rather than to try and create a climate where business and urban centers might flourish.

These current bills, HB 4770 and HB 4771 go so far that I am prompted to take some action. While prior State decisions regarding gay and lesbian couples have been self destructive for our state these current bills are unconscionable. These bills would rescind already existing health insurance benefits that domestic partners have. How can any State representative feel this is a good action to take? You are wreaking havoc on families emotional well being. Imagine, all of you in this room, waking up one morning and having your spouse and children's health benefits denied. Would you be able to go to work and be a productive citizen? Would you be able to be the best parent that you could? Would you be able to volunteer for the myriad of activities that have become important to your life? Why would any human being want to inflict this on people?

Families with "domestic partners" are my customers at my art gallery. They are my preschool student's parents. They are my daughter's school mates. They are volunteers at my PTO and my religious community. In short, they are wonderfully productive and good citizens, citizens that are much needed in our State and friends I care about.

I understand that you are able to stop these bills from being made into law. I urge you as people who care about our state and citizens to do this. Please take a moment to think about what these bills will do if they are made into State law.

Sincerely,

Allison Stupka

225 Buena Vista, Ann Arbor, Michigan