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March 25, 2009

Ladies and Gentlemen,

My Name is Daniel Summers, and I am a pediatrician here in Augusta. I am here today on behalf of the Maine chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, to express our strong support for LD 1020: An Act to End Discrimination in Civil Marriage and Affirm Religious Freedom. My life and my profession are about taking care of children, helping them to be safe, and healthy, and to grow-up to achieve their full potential. Because I want what is best for children, I support of legislation that would grant gay and lesbian couples the right to full marriage equality in Maine.

As a pediatrician, I come into contact with families every day. Many families have a mother and a father, but many others do not. Some children are raised by one parent, or by grandparents, or other relatives. Many families are a blend of step-mothers and step-fathers, step-brothers and step-sisters. And I work with many families where children are raised by two mothers or two fathers. No two families are exactly alike, but all are united by a common desire, which is to do the best and provide the best for their children.

The AAP supports this legislation because we believe that all children deserve to live in stable families, and that recognizing the rights of gay and lesbian couples to marry would provide legal protection for families that are not, at this point, recognized as such by the state. We believe that the love, support and devotion of gay and lesbian parents is no different from the love, support and devotion of other couples, and that children can and do thrive in both kinds of families. We recognize the right of gays and lesbians to marry because we recognize them as equally capable to make decisions for themselves, their children, and their shared lives together. And we believe that gay and lesbian adolescents should have the same opportunities for full acceptance into civil society that their heterosexual peers have, and should have access to the same means of achieving their goals and pursuing their dreams.

It is also important for us as Pediatricians to express our support marriage equality because of not everyone gets the close up view of gay and lesbian parents and their children that we do. Not only do I and my colleagues in the Association have first hand experience taking care of thousands of children in our practices, but we have extensively studied the scientific literature in the field about what makes for good child outcomes. This shouldn't be a surprise. What makes a good parent is good parenting and building a strong and healthy relationship between the adult and child. That is something that everyone is capable of, no matter what their sexual orientation.

Thank you for your kind attention. My colleagues and I urge you to support this important piece of legislation.

Daniel Summers, MD