

# MAINE ASSOCIATION OF PSYCHIATRIC PHYSICIANS

*President*  
Janis Petzel, MD  
*Immediate Past President*  
Edward Pontius, MD  
*Treasurer*  
Patrick Maidman, MD  
*Secretary*  
Joseph Rubin, MD, DFAPA  
*APA Assembly Representative*  
W. Bogan Brooks, MD,  
DFAPA  
*APA Assembly Dep. Representative*  
Robert Crosswell, MD, DFAPA  
*Public Affairs Representative*  
James Maier, MD, DFAPA  
*Resident Representative*  
Dena Whitesell, MD  
*Councilor*  
David Moltz, MD, DFAPA  
*Councilor*  
P. Lynn Ouellette, MD  
*Councilor*  
Lawrence Mutty, MD, DFAPA  
*Councilor Emeritus*  
Ulrich Jacobsohn, MD,  
DFAPA  
*District Branch Coordinator*  
Warene Chase-Eldridge

Testimony of Dr. Janis B. Petzel, President,  
Maine Association of Psychiatric Physicians; and of the  
On Behalf of the Executive Committee of the Maine Council on Child and Adolescent  
Psychiatry  
In Support of LD 1020  
April 22, 2009

Senator Bliss, Representative Priest, and distinguished members of the Joint Committee on the Judiciary, the Maine Association of Psychiatric Physicians (MAPP) is proud to stand with our national organization, the American Psychiatric Association, as well as the Executive Committee of the Maine Council on Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, in support of L.D. 1020.

As physicians, we can see the positive influence of stable, adult partnerships on all family members. Family stability plays a crucial role in maintaining health—physical and psychological—at all ages, but especially for children. Sustained and committed family relationships are cornerstones of our social support network as we face life’s challenges, including illness and loss. There is ample scientific evidence to support what we know from working with our patients; long-term spousal and family support enhances physical and mental health at all stages of development.

Organized Psychiatry Organized Psychiatry has not always been on the right side of this issue, I am sorry to say. Even large organizations react to issues out of fear and ignorance at times. But once Psychiatry looked at the scientific and medical evidence, it became very clear that healthy human sexuality comes in diverse forms. The key words in that sentence are *healthy, human, and diverse*. The American Psychiatric Association changed its policies to reflect scientific reality. We hope that the Maine Legislature has the courage and wisdom to do the same. Both the APA and MAPP view civil marriage as a basic *human* right. I am proud to say that MAPP leadership voted unanimously to support LD 1020 on behalf of the psychiatrists in the state of Maine.

Physicians make decisions based on scientific evidence. I declare loudly and clearly to this committee and everyone gathered here: Scientific research has firmly established that homosexuality is **not** a disorder or disease, but rather a **normal** variant of human sexual orientation. It is not something to be suppressed or treated, nor can it be, and in fact, trying to treat homosexuality as a disease can be itself be harmful. Despite discrimination and the hardships imposed by discrimination, the vast majority of gay and lesbian individuals lead happy, healthy, well-adjusted, and productive lives. They participate in and contribute to our society as individuals and as families. They are good parents. There is no scientific or medical basis to support the differential treatment of gay men and lesbians.

Indeed, the medical and scientific data and the consensus among medical organizations *support* this bill allowing same-sex couples to join in marriage. Marriage is a central institution in our personal lives and in our society. Think about the burden imposed on same-sex couples who are making commitments and raising children, but are doing it in a legal and cultural vacuum, and are denied the ability to solidify their commitment in marriage. That this discrimination comes from the government serves to reinforce to fear that their relationships are not respected and that their contributions to the community are not valued. That is the wrong message for Maine’s government to send to these families and the people of this State.

Civil marriage provides a unique set of benefits and responsibilities to those who join it. Civil marriage ensures legal and economic protections to adults in committed relationships and to their children. Currently, same-sex couples and

the children of gay and lesbian parents – because those couples and parents cannot marry – do not have the same protection that civil marriage affords other families.

The Maine Association of Psychiatric Physicians and the Executive Committee of the Maine Council on Child and Adolescent Psychiatry both strongly support Maine legislation that provides for civil marriage for same-sex families. Passing this bill will protect all Maine families from discrimination and will make a positive contribution to the mental health of the people of Maine.

A change in Maine public policy is long overdue. We urge you to vote “Ought to Pass” on LD 1020. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Janis B. Petzel, M.D., President  
Maine Association of Psychiatric Physicians

Contact info:

Janis B. Petzel, M.D.  
116 Second St. Suite 1  
Hallowell, ME 04347  
207.242.4007  
petzeljanis@ hotmail.com

Joseph Lebenzon, M.D., DLFAPA  
Maine Council for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Executive Committee  
21 Elm St., 4th Floor  
Camden, ME 0484