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**Testimony on Bill B20-0118,
"Marriage Officiant Amendment Act of 2013"**

Delivered before the Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety
March 14, 2013

Good morning, Chairman Wells and Councilmembers. I am Rick Rosendall, President of the Gay and Lesbian Activists Alliance, which has been fighting for LGBT equality in the District since 1971.

Current D.C. law requires that for every marriage to be official, there must be a wedding ceremony. The law is not concerned with how the ceremony is conducted or what words are spoken. The law only requires the certificate to be signed by the couple, a witness, and a court-certified officiant. Only judges and authorized clergy may be officiants.

Judges hold civil ceremonies only in the courthouse, but this should not be the only non-religious option. Requiring non-judge officiants to be clergy serves no government interest. Many couples will seek a church wedding and a religious leader to officiate, and will thus be comfortable with the current law. However, many couples prefer a non-religious wedding and a friend or other non-minister as their officiant.

We support Bill 20-118's provision allowing for temporary officiants; but we also advocate changing the legislation either to make the ceremony optional or to create a process to allow anyone to be an officiant on an ongoing basis.

We also wish to associate ourselves with the testimony of our colleague, Bob Summersgill.

Thank you.