

EXHIBIT 7  
DATE 1/14/05  
HB 240

February 14, 2005

## Testimony in opposition to HB 240

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee:

My name is Eric Schiedermayer. I represent the Montana Catholic Conference, the voice for Montana's Roman Catholic bishops in the state legislature, and I rise in opposition to this bill.

The public witness of the Catholic Church is founded on Scripture and moral principles, not party platforms. Human dignity and human rights are God-given; they are not earned nor are they legislated. Our tradition affirms these rights, seeking human respect, economic and personal security, and social equality for all people. We stand opposed to ALL crime and hateful treatment of ANY person.

Legislation, however, often brings with it unknown or unintended effects, and this is one of those cases.

The problem with this type of legislation is two-fold. First, it exposes to prosecution anyone speaking out against homosexual behavior. Someone who finds the expression of the beliefs of the Catholic Church on homosexual activity too blunt will invoke the criminal code to silence the teaching. Freedom of speech and freedom of religious expression will be restricted.

Secondly, this type of legislation begins the process of legitimizing behavior and a lifestyle which is destructive – both to those caught up in its practice, and to those closest to them. Children are especially harmed when they grow up in a culture where moral truth is further clouded and contradicted.

We do not hate persons who have homosexual inclinations or who engage in homosexual behavior. Likewise, we do not hate persons who engage in adulterous relationships or other illicit sexual behavior outside of marriage. But we will continue to reject such behavior as destructive to both those who engage in it and those around them.

The traditional value of chastity, the sanctity of marriage and family, and the freedom of parents to rear their children in a healthy and moral climate are critical to a well ordered society. All of these are under assault today and can be further threatened by poorly conceived legislation. Attempts to protect people from discrimination should not exacerbate these problems. People should not be forced by law to accept into their homes, personal lives, or schools, behavior or a lifestyle which they find morally objectionable, even in the cause of non-discrimination.

Legislation must not make homosexual behavior or lifestyle a protected or approved activity. We urge you to reject this bill.

Respectfully submitted,



Eric Schiedermayer  
Executive Director, Montana Catholic Conference