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State should support equal marriage

The Maine Campus Editorial Position Board

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State should support equal marriage

The Issue: Hearings in Augusta have allowed both sides to have their say on the definition of marriage.

What We Think: We endorse the passage of the "Marriage Bill."

Yesterday, we heard both sides of the same-sex marriage debate make their case in Augusta. Those arguments have convinced us that marriage equality, as it is proposed in Sen. Dennis Damon's bill, LD 1020, poses no threat to Maine's straight marriages or to its religious faithful.

Damon's bill specifies the protection of religious groups to determine, for themselves, what kinds of ceremonies they perform. Socially conservative faiths will not be forced to violate their traditions or beliefs.

Instead, the bill expands the rights of those whose faith, or lack thereof, allows for the celebration of human commitment regardless of gender. It seems disingenuous for conservative churches to argue that this bill violates their rights, when the current condition violates the rights of progressive faiths to perform the kinds of ceremonies they view as legitimate.

But fundamentally, it is important for Maine to take a stand to declare that all human beings are born deserving of the same rights. This bill makes clear that the state will recognize marriage equally, rather than distinguish acceptable and unacceptable forms of human relationships. Leave that to the churches, and let them debate and mull their own positions in accordance with their own traditions. This bill poses no threat to that process.

Instead, it allows gay couples access to a fundamental legal distinction. The language is important: The same words for the same institution means the same recognition for the same commitment. It announces to the world that the state of Maine accepts gays and lesbians for what they are: human.

The above editorial is written by the editorial position board, whose members are Eryk Salvaggio, Mario Moretto, Heather Steeves, Zach Dionne, William P. Davis, Amy Brooks, Dylan Riley and Kegan Zema.