

## Discrimination Hurts Children

Often overlooked in the debate about gay marriage is the impact marriage inequality has on the children of lesbian and gay couples. When a straight couple has or adopts a child, they are *automatically* considered the child's legal parents. By denying GLBT Americans the right to marry, we deprive their children of more than 1,200 state and federal rights and benefits that come with a marriage license. Here are just a few.

### Child Support

If the couple were to separate, one parent may have no legal obligation to pay child support.

### Inheritance

Unless the parent has executed a will (or has the money to do so), the child may not inherit from the non-biological parent.

### Everyday Parenting

Because they cannot legally marry, same-sex couples cannot automatically function as equal parents out in the world, such as in their child's school or in the doctor's office.

### Health Care

In most cases, children can't be placed on the health plan of non-biological parent unless that parent has legal custody.

### Emergency Medical Decisions

The inability to marry interferes with ability of both parents to make emergency medical decisions for the child or to visit the child in the hospital.

### Social Security Benefits

The child loses out on social security benefits of the non-biological parent, which the child would normally receive if the parent were to die.

### Custody

If the parents were to separate, a parent could be completely denied access to the child.

If the non-biological parent were to die or become seriously ill, the child could be removed from her home and placed in foster care or with distant relatives, instead of the second parent with whom the child has established a loving bond.

### Family Medical Leave Act

The Federal Family and Medical Leave Act allows married couples up to 12 weeks off to care for a sick child or spouse. The law does not extend these protections to same-sex couples because they cannot legally marry. As a result, if a child were to become seriously ill, her parent may not be able to take the necessary time off from work to care for the child.

### Worker's Compensation Benefits

Normally, the spouse and children of a worker killed on the job are entitled to receive death benefits.

### Economic Harm

Same-sex couples are denied many of the financial benefits of being able to marry, creating a smaller economic pool from which families can draw for their basic living needs and inevitably impacting the standard of living of the child.

*While these benefits may vary from state-to-state, one impact on children that crosses state lines is the emotional harm done to these children. Research has shown that children raised by parents of the same-gender do very well in school and later on in life; one of their greatest disadvantages is the bullying and scorn they suffer because their parents are not treated as equals.*