How would you characterise your views on the Bill in general?

In support

I strongly support this bill. I think it is an important step forward for our country and shows that we act on our belief in equality.

How would you characterise your views on the introduction of same sex marriage, so that same sex couples can marry each other?

In support

I think it is important that same sex couples be entitled in law to be married by the state in the same way that opposite sex couples can. I also think that the bill allows the many churches and religious bodies to choose to marry opposite sex couples if they wish whilst also respecting the wishes of those who do not wish to do so.

How would you characterise your views on putting belief celebrants on the same footing as religious celebrants?

In support

Humanists can already carry out marriages. I think the bill clarifies this and allows other belief celebrants the opportunity to do so.

How would you characterise your views on the arrangements for authorising celebrants to solemnise opposite sex and same sex marriage (including the opt-in procedures)?

In support

I agree that religious and belief organisations should be free to decide for themselves. Some religious bodies want to conduct same-sex marriages and others do not. Religious freedom should apply to both groups, and I think the bill gets the balance right. I think that an amendment should be made to section 11(2) of the bill, in order to give those religious and belief bodies that want to, the option of using the gender-free form of the marriage ceremony, in section 11(2)(g), for mixed-sex couples who would prefer that form. This is particularly important for mixed-sex couples where one or both is transgender or intersex. Religious bodies that wish to always use the “husband and wife” gendered form of the marriage ceremony should be free to continue to do so.

How would you characterise your views on civil partnerships changing to marriages?

In support
I think that the bill should be amended so that people who have a civil partnership registered elsewhere, can convert it to a marriage. Not allowing this would cause real problems for couples who registered a civil partnership abroad and then moved to Scotland. They will be unable to change to a marriage unless they first dissolve their civil partnership. But that requires proving that the civil partnership has irretrievably broken down, by living apart for a year. It is very unfair to ask civil partners to do that in order to marry.

**How would you characterise your views on allowing civil marriage ceremonies to take place anywhere, other than religious premises, agreed between the couple and registrar?**

In support

This is a good thing which provides more flexibility for all who wish to marry.

**How would you characterise your views on allowing the religious and belief registration of civil partnerships?**

In support

This provides options and flexibility which is a good thing.

**How would you characterise your views on allowing transgender persons to stay married when obtaining a full Gender Recognition Certificate, which provides legal recognition in the acquired gender?**

In support

I strongly support the principle of allowing transgender people who are married to obtain gender recognition without being required by the state to divorce. However, I believe that spousal consent should not be required for the granting of gender recognition, which is a personal matter, but should instead be required for the subsequent re-registration of the marriage and the issue of a new marriage certificate. As at present, the non-trans spouse would continue to be able to obtain a divorce in such circumstances, if they wished to end the marriage. I believe that a provision for simpler medical evidence for long-term transitioned people should be added to the bill. I also believe that the minimum age for applying for gender recognition should be brought into line with the minimum age for marrying in Scotland, that is, 16.

**Would you like to comment on the wider issue of protections for those in society who may have concerns about same sex marriage?**

I believe that the bill includes appropriate protections for religious bodies and celebrants who choose not to carry out same sex marriages. I strongly oppose allowing civil registrars the right to opt out of conducting same sex marriage. Unlike religious celebrants, civil registrars are carrying out a civil function on behalf of the state, and therefore an opt-out on grounds of their personal religious belief is not appropriate. I also believe that teachers should not be allowed to opt out of mentioning same sex marriage. However I know that in Catholic schools this will be a controversial issue as is already the case when discussing contraception.
Teachers in Catholic schools already have a difficult time in teaching children the truth about sex and sexuality.

**Would you like to comment on the wider issue of freedom of speech?**

I don't think the bill will have any effect on freedom of speech.

**Would you like to comment on any other wider issues in relation to the Bill that are not mentioned above?**

I believe that mixed sex civil partnership should be introduced to allow complete equality. I also believe that private sector pensions should not be allowed to pay a smaller survivor pension to people in same-sex marriages than they pay to those in mixed-sex marriages. This is clear discrimination.

**Are you responding as...**

a private individual

Catriona Gill
14 August 2013