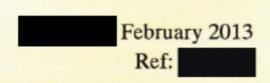


## LONDON SW1A 0AA





Thank you for contacting me about same-sex marriage. I do take on board the concerns you raise.

As you will be aware, the first vote on legalising same-sex marriage was passed with a considerable majority in the House of Commons. I voted in favour of these proposals and believe that they are an important step forward for our country.

Like you, I am a strong believer in marriage and its important role in society. Marriage helps people to commit to each other and I think it is only right that this should be open to same-sex couples. Rather than being an attack on traditional values, I believe that enabling same-sex coupled to get married will strengthen family ties in our society. Essentially, I consider that if we believe commitment, fidelity, and marriage are good things that help bring stability and make us strong, we should not restrict marriage to only opposite-sex couples. There is also an important argument about equality: if two gay people love each other and want to commit to each other, why should they not be able to do something – get married – that heterosexual couples are able to do?

I know that there are strong feelings about this issue on both sides of the argument. That is why we held a full and formal public consultation. We received over 228,000 responses to the consultation, as well as a number of petitions, and all the views raised were carefully considered in preparing our response.

We put forward these proposals because we firmly believe that they are fair and the right thing to do. I also believe that they have widespread support. The majority (53%) of those who responded to the consultation were in favour of the proposals. There have also been several published polls on the issue of equal civil marriage. All of the published polls have found that more voters support equal civil marriage – however described – than oppose it, with the number in favour ranging from 43 per cent to 65 per cent, depending on wording, and the number opposed ranging from 27 per cent to 36 per cent.

I know there are fears that religious organisations and individuals will be forced into conducting same-sex marriage ceremonies. This Government and I value the role of Christianity and believe it continues to play an important part in the culture, heritage and fabric of the British nation. I have always been very clear that religious organisations who do not wish to hold same-sex marriages should not and will not be forced to do so. Instead, religious organisations will be able to "opt-in" to host same-sex marriages.



We are also introducing a "quadruple lock" of legal protections to ensure that individuals, churches, synagogues and mosques are properly protected.

- First, legislation will state explicitly that no religious organisation or individual can be compelled to marry same-sex couples or to permit this to happen on their premises.
- Second, the Equality Act 2010 will be amended to ensure that no discrimination claims can
  be brought against religious organisations or individual minsters for refusing to marry samesex couples or allowing their premises to be used for this purpose.
- Third, it will be unlawful for religious organisations or their minsters to marry same-sex couples unless they have expressly opted to do so.
- Finally, the Churches of England and Wales have explicitly stated that they do not wish to conduct same-sex marriage and it will therefore be illegal for these churches to marry samesex couples, or to opt-in to doing so.

European law already puts religious freedom beyond doubt, but this "quadruple lock" will ensure that people who do not want to perform same-sex marriages will be under no obligation to do so.

You raise particular concerns about the role of teachers. Teachers will continue to have the clear right to express their own beliefs, or that of their faith, in a professional way. This includes the belief that marriage should be between one man and one woman.

No teacher will be required to promote or endorse views which go against their beliefs. As with any other area of the curriculum, teachers will of course be required to teach the factual position that under law marriage can be between opposite-sex couples and same-sex couples. This already happens in many schools – such as faith schools - where subjects such as divorce or sex and relationship education are taught with sensitivity. Parents will continue to have the right to withdraw their children from sex education lessons that they do not consider appropriate.

I apologise for the length of this letter but I did want to address as many of your points as possible. Let me assure you that I wholeheartedly count on your support as your local MP so I do hope you will reconsider your decision and thank you again for writing to me.

**David Cameron** 

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