



尋道會

**Unitarian Universalists Hong Kong**

**Submission to the  
Legislative Council on  
Inclusion of same-sex couples under the  
Domestic Violence (Amendment) Bill 2009**

Unitarian Universalists Hong Kong welcomes the inclusion of same-sex couples in the Domestic Violence (Amendment) Bill 2009, and would like to see the bill be passed as soon as possible. We have some concerns over the bill, however, especially in section 3(b).

We are concerned over the definition of cohabiting relationships and are not sure if the definition is necessary. In the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004 of UK, the word "cohabitants" is substituted by "two persons who, although not married to each other, are living together as husband and wife or (if of the same sex) in an equivalent relationship" without further definition of cohabiting relationship and offer cohabiting couples the same coverage as married and divorced couples.

The law should recognize the special relationship that cohabitant couples have with each other, without being legally married. We worry if the definition of cohabiting relationship in the bill might limit its usage in certain situations of intimate relationship violence. We especially worry about the negative impact on opposite-sex cohabitants if they have less coverage from the law when compared to the previous version.

In the same-sex violence survey conducted by the Chinese University of Hong Kong and the Women Coalition of Hong Kong, intimate relationship violence in same-sex couples has the problem of forcing the partner to "come out," which is unique to same-sex couples. There is a special need for trained personnel when dealing with same-sex domestic violence. We urge the government to add specific indicators of escalation of violence to the current list when dealing with same-sex domestic violence to provide assistance to victims and prevent further violence. We recognize that domestic violence is a complex issue that requires an inter-disciplinary approach that involves health care professionals, social workers and the police, and all of them require directives to deal with same-sex intimate relationship violence in order to help the victims. We urge the administration to give directives to various departments so that they could learn to deal with same-sex domestic violence victims when they call for help.

Currently, there are no specific services for same-sex domestic violence victims, like temporary shelter and police might need to distinguish between penetrators and victims in same-sex domestic violence. We urge the administration to initiate the preparation work as soon as possible so that the ordinance will become an effective law.

We recommend the government to:

1. Pass the Domestic Violence (Amendment) Bill 2009 as soon as possible to cover same-sex couples under the law.
2. Provide administrative directive to add violence escalating factors that are specific to same-sex relationships to the checklist for intimate violence, so as to provide frontline assistance to same-sex domestic violence victims.
3. Provide additional resources in order to provide social services, like immediate shelter for same-sex domestic violence victims, and provide guideline for police to deal with same-sex domestic violence.

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