

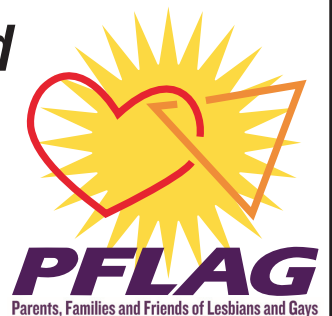


PFLAG

SUPPORT * EDUCATION * ADVOCACY

Bringing the Message Home **2010**

*PFLAG's Eighth Annual Guide to Working
with Elected Leaders to Move Equality Forward*



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Stand Up. Speak Out. Bring the Message Home.

No voice is more powerful or more persuasive, than that of a PFLAG member. As the parents, families, friends and allies of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community, we know first-hand the impact that discriminatory laws have on our loved ones and ourselves. Our stories of the pain prejudice inflicts upon our families are enormously important in moving fair legislation forward and in opposing anti-LGBT bills and resolutions in Congress.

Since 2002, PFLAG members have met with countless lawmakers and their staff through our *Bringing the Message Home* campaign. Your voices have helped move equality forward on important issues like, advocating for workplace fairness, safer schools, and family acceptance. And it is essential that PFLAG members *continue* to educate key decision-makers about the issues that impact our families.

With over a decade of PFLAG advocacy there was an overwhelming sense of excitement when the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act was signed into law on October 28, 2009. The new law is truly a historic first for PFLAG and so many members of the LGBT community as it is the first federal law to include protections for both sexual orientation *and* gender identity. It adds these protections to existing hate crimes laws passed nearly 40 years ago!

Building off of the incredible legislative and administrative gains of last year, this year's 2010 *Bringing the Message Home* focuses on nine critical pieces of legislation and it emphasizes the importance of including our transgender loved ones in all the work we do. Our guide includes background information and talking points on each topic and information on the "how-to's" of everyday lobbying. Also – similar to last year - this resource articulates key priorities for the Obama Administration central to PFLAG's mission along with ways you can directly influence the President to adopt fair changes that will help strengthen our families.

It is critically important that PFLAG families let lawmakers and the President know where they stand on important legislation and administrative priorities.

We know that our opponents are tireless in their efforts to block progress and rollback equality for LGBT Americans. On average, Congress hears from *ten* opponents of equality for every *one* person who calls, writes or e-mails in favor of civil rights for LGBT people. PFLAG is committed to turning that tide, and giving voice to the countless Americans who believe in equal rights and full citizenship for every member of our family, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

We cannot allow anti-family voices to dominate the debate on Capitol Hill. *Now* is the time for PFLAG members to schedule in-district meetings with lawmakers.

Remember: the issues and guidelines provided here are just starting points. You can always visit our website, at www.pflag.org, for the latest news and information about important issues facing the

LGBT community. And you can always contact your PFLAG Field Coordinator for more information, or with any questions you might have – you can find a listing of appropriate contacts on page 45.

Call your congressperson's district office today and schedule an appointment to talk with them about why LGBT equality is so important. It is up to each member of the PFLAG family to *Bring the Message Home* that discrimination, prejudice and second-class citizenship must end.

Five Easy Pieces: Setting Up & Conducting Visits with a Lawmaker

1. Find your representative. While Congress is usually in session from early January until late September, lawmakers frequently return home to their districts to meet with constituents and discuss important issues. PFLAG members should contact their representatives' in-district office to find out when they may be able to arrange an in-person meeting with the lawmaker, or a meeting with a staff member if the lawmaker is unavailable.

- Log onto the PFLAG Action Center at www.capwiz.com/pflag and type in your zip code.
- Click on your congressperson's page and find contact information for their in-district and Washington, D.C. offices.
- *A note on State Representatives and Senators:* State legislatures have varying sessions, with some being a year-long process and others presenting a very short window of opportunity to influence legislation. For more information on your state's legislative calendar, visit Project Vote Smart online at www.votesmart.org.

2. Make the call! Once you've found your representative via the PFLAG Action Center (www.capwiz.com/pflag), call your local office and explain that you would like to meet with the legislator, and why. **Be sure to say that you live in the lawmaker's district** so that you will receive priority on the lawmaker's calendar. Also be prepared to submit an official request for your meeting, either by fax or e-mail. (A sample meeting request is included on page 7.)

Keep in mind that you may not receive a meeting with your lawmaker, but may instead be scheduled to speak with staff members. Staff members make critical decisions and advise your congressperson on important issues. Take the meeting seriously and keep in mind that staffers are the "eyes and ears" of your representative.

3. Do your homework. Before meeting with your legislator, you should:

- Identify three or four PFLAG members who can attend the meeting;
- Set an agenda mapping out which topics you will discuss and who will cover which topics;
- Plan on spending 15-30 minutes on each topic; and be sure to research your lawmaker's record on LGBT issues: which measures did he or she support? How did he or she vote on issues such as on civil rights, judicial nominees and privacy? Use that information to shape the message you deliver during your meeting. For example, if your representative is a former teacher, consider focusing on safe schools issues and tell stories about issues your children face in school.
- **Take family photos with you to your meeting.** Pictures, coupled with your personal stories, help put a real face on what can sometimes be abstract issues for legislators.

4. **Make the visit!** Always be sure to show up on time for your appointment, and be neatly dressed. One person should thank the staff or representative for granting the meeting and for their positive votes and/or support on issues in the past. To make your visit as productive as possible, remember to:

- Select one person to be the primary spokesperson for your group.
- Make your “ask” (using the issue briefs in this guide) at the beginning.
- Stick to your agenda and respect the time given for your meeting.
- Keep returning to your central point, even if the representative or staffer tries to divert the conversation to a different topic.
- Personalize your story and localize issues – relate what you are asking for to a personal experience and a local need.
- Ask questions!
- Acknowledge that the representative may not be ready to commit to your position yet, but also ask that they keep an open mind or remain neutral...and be clear that you want to continue the relationship and dialogue with them.
- End on a positive note, and return to a “feel good” talking point that leaves a positive impression and shows appreciation to the representative or their staff for meeting with you.

5. **Follow-up and follow through!** Send a thank you note (a sample is available on page 8) after your meeting, restating any agreements and reiterating your requests. And, if you’ve promised additional information for the lawmaker, be sure to include that along with your note. Offer to be a resource for the representative. And remember to complete a visit report, which can be found on page 9, and return it to your PFLAG Field Coordinator.

Playing by the Rules: Lobbying Do's and Don'ts

As a 501(c)3 organization, PFLAG and its chapters have some limitations on how they can lobby and, in particular, some notable restrictions on election issues. But, as the Alliance for Justice – an organization committed to strengthening the public interest community's ability to influence public policy, and foster the next generation of advocates – reminds us, “Most nonprofits can and should lobby! Lobbying is one subset of advocacy, and includes both direct and grassroots lobbying.”

There are, however, important regulations and definitions to keep in mind when visiting with lawmakers.

Direct vs. Grassroots Lobbying

Direct lobbying is an attempt to persuade lawmakers to pass or to not pass a bill. It is any direct communication with a legislator or his or her staff in order to influence current or pending legislation. PFLAG's visits to legislators and staff on Capitol Hill as part of *Bringing the Message Home* and the in-district congressional visits members will make in their communities are considered direct lobbying.

Grassroots lobbying is encouraging the people who live in a lawmaker's district to exercise their influence on their legislators on whether they should vote for or against some legislation. For example, when PFLAG National contacts members and supporters asking them to take action by contacting their legislators, it is considered grassroots lobbying on the part of the National Office. The general rule is that an organization can use a certain amount of the money that it earns to communicate with lawmakers. This happens when PFLAG works to communicate the importance of equal rights for our LGBT loved ones to elected officials. However, we cannot use more than 20 percent of our budget on these lobbying efforts. **Additionally, PFLAG is not allowed to endorse or oppose any candidate elected for political office.** This rule encompasses all federal, state and local candidates, and this rule applies to all PFLAG chapters.

If you have questions on lobbying regulations, you can learn more by contacting your PFLAG Field Coordinator. A listing of appropriate contacts on page 45.

Sample E-mail or Fax for Scheduling an In-District Meeting



Re: Appointment with [*insert legislator's name here*]

The Honorable [*First Name*] [*Last Name*]

Attn.: Scheduler

U.S. House of Representatives *OR* U.S Senate

[*Street Address*]

[*City, State Zip*]

VIA FACSIMILE: [*fax number*]

Dear Representative/Senator [*Last Name*]:

I am writing to request a meeting with you in your [*name of city where district office is located*] office for [*insert date and time*]. I, along with members of Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) [*insert chapter name*], would like to discuss upcoming legislation that impacts our lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) loved ones.

I will contact you shortly regarding the possibility of scheduling this meeting. In the meantime, you can contact me at [*insert phone number*] or [*insert e-mail*] if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

[*your name*]

PFLAG [*chapter name*]

Sample Thank You Letter



Re: Appointment with *[insert legislator's name here]*

The Honorable *[First Name]* *[Last Name]*

Attn.: Scheduler

U.S. House of Representatives *OR* U.S. Senate

[Street Address]

[City, State Zip]

VIA FACSIMILE: *[fax number]*

Dear Senator/Representative *[Last Name]*:

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me, along with members of Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) *[insert chapter name]* on *[insert date and time]*. We appreciate the thoughtful discussion on the rights of our lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) loved ones living in our *[insert name of district/state here]*. We value your time and attention on this issue that is of vital concern to our families and many of your constituents.

We look forward to working with you to help create a more just society for our LGBT loved ones through addressing important civil rights legislation like *[include name of specific legislation if applicable]*.

[Be sure to include any follow-up information if you were asked a question and unable to answer it during the meeting. If this section is longer than one paragraph, include it as a one-page attachment, remembering to be brief, clear and concise in all of your communications.]

Thanks again for all of your time. Please feel free to contact me at anytime if there is any way I can be helpful to you.

Sincerely,

[your name]

PFLAG *[chapter name]*

PFLAG's Congressional Visit Report Form

Please fill out this visit report form immediately after your visit and share it with your Field Coordinator after every visit you complete. This will help us track members of Congress who have learned about the issues and those who have not, as well as which members have connected with you. Thanks for your help!

Basic Information

Name of Representative/Senator: _____

State/District: _____

Date Visited: _____ Time Visit Started/Ended: _____

Information on Legislator/Staff

Did you meet with the member of Congress, staff or both? _____

What staff members were present? _____

Name/Title: _____

Name/Title: _____

Information on Your Team: Who Came on the Visit?

Name/E-mail: _____

Name/E-mail: _____

Was the Senator/Representative supportive of including gender identity or expression in federal legislation? _____

Did the Senator/Representative express any reservations about adding gender identity and expression to supporting a transgender inclusive federal legislation? If so, what were they?

What questions did the Congressperson ask? _____

Looking Ahead

What would you suggest as next steps with this member of Congress? _____

Other Comments? (Please use an additional sheet if necessary.)

Tips and Tricks

To make the most of your visit with your congressperson, remember these seven simple rules:

1. **Do your research.** Before you meet with your congressperson or the other lobbyists attending this meeting, research your lawmaker and the issues you plan to discuss. How did he or she vote on past legislation? What bills is he or she endorsing? How friendly is this person to our issues?
2. **Create an agenda.** When you meet with your fellow lobbyists, create an agenda outlining what you will talk about during your visit.
3. **Focus in.** There are many things we want our lawmakers to do for our families – talking about every bill and priority would take days! So make the most of the time you have with your lawmaker and focus on one or two key issues.
4. **Have a specific “ask” in mind.** The more specific and concrete the better! Perhaps you want the lawmaker to co-sponsor a bill. Maybe you want them to vote a certain way on a piece of legislation. Whatever it is, make sure that while you’re visiting your congressperson you always have your “ask” in mind.
5. **Be brief, clear and concise.** Being brief allows you to get through your agenda in a timely manner and it shows that you respect your congressperson’s time. Also, clarity will help get your point across to your lawmaker.
6. **Be courteous.** Thank people for meeting with you when you arrive, thank them again when you leave, and it’s a good idea to follow up with a thank you e-mail or note.
7. **Complete a visit report form.** After you speak with your lawmaker, tell us how it went! Use the form on page 9 of this booklet and return it to your Field Coordinator.

Know Your Audience: Talking Points for Allies & Adversaries

It is essential that PFLAG families meet and talk with *every* lawmaker, including those who are already supportive of our issues and especially those who are not. Our stories can cement a supportive lawmaker's positive stance, move those who may be on the fence about critical issues towards a more supportive stance, and change the hearts and minds of those who may simply not have heard from someone with a LGBT loved one before.

When talking to our allies, remember to thank them for standing up for our LGBT loved ones.

- Reiterate how important it is that they continue to speak out and vote the right way on specific pieces of legislation.
- Ask your lawmaker to co-sponsor legislation that they may already be supporting. By co-sponsoring a bill, our elected leaders make an additional commitment to moving the issue forward.
- Find out how you can help support their efforts. By offering to help move legislation forward, you can further show your elected leaders that they are not fighting the good fight(s) alone.

When talking to those who may be on the fence, remember to emphasize the real impact their support will have on real families in their district(s).

- Talk about how support for LGBT issues will affect your family and loved ones.
- Ask your representative what their specific concerns or hesitations may be about a particular bill, and discuss those concerns.
- Invite your representative to attend a PFLAG meeting to hear from other families in the district who also care about the issue.
- Offer PFLAG and your chapter as a resource for the lawmaker and their staff.

When talking to those who are opposed to our issues, remember to have a respectful conversation, keeping lines of communication open, and correct any misinformation the lawmaker may have.

- Emphasize how a wrong vote on a particular issue will impact your family.
- Challenge their assumptions that fair-minded votes may not be popular – in fact, many people support certain fair-minded measures.
- Encourage your lawmaker to learn more about the issues, and offer PFLAG as a resource.



PFLAG's 2010 Legislative Priorities



The Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA)

Bill Number:

Introduced in the House as H.R. 3017 by Representative Barney Frank (D-MA) on June 24, 2009, and in the Senate as S. 1584 by Senator Jeff Merkley (D-OR) on August 5, 2009.

What this Bill Will Do:

The Employment Non-Discrimination Act would prohibit employment discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. These protections are desperately needed because in 29 states, an employer may legally fire someone based on his or her sexual orientation, and in 38 states an employer may legally fire someone because of their gender identity or gender expression.

What you Need to Ask for:

Urge your Members of Congress to support a gender identity-inclusive version of the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, which would provide employment protections for all LGBT Americans. We encourage you to reach out to your Representative and Senators and urge them to cosponsor this bill today.

PFLAG Talking Points:

- **ENDA is about extending to everyone the successful protections that have been extremely effective in many states.** Already, 12 states, the District of Columbia, and more than 100 localities have laws that protect all LGBT workers, – covering nearly 40 percent of Americans – from employment discrimination. These advancements have helped to protect workers in many places, but many more remain vulnerable. Passing ENDA would end inconsistencies that vary by geography and ensure that, no matter where an employee works, they enjoy the same protections as all other employees. A strong federal law will provide uniformity of coverage and close the gaps in state and local law.
- **Inclusion of gender identity is essential to the bill.** The inclusion of gender identity is vital. First, it is necessary to cover transgender people, who are among those Americans most vulnerable to employment discrimination. Second, it is essential to fully protect lesbian, gay, bisexual, and even heterosexual people who may not fit traditional gender norms (i.e., a woman who appears “too masculine”, or a man who appears “too feminine”). The LGBT and ally community is speaking in one voice: we must move forward with employment protections together.
- **Nondiscrimination is a best practice in corporate America.** Corporate America generally opposes discrimination and has enacted policies protecting its LGBT employees. In fact, more than 150 Fortune 500 companies have policies that include gender identity/expression. Companies have adopted these policies because they are motivated by the bottom line:

searching for and training a replacement employee is expensive, as is not hiring the best and most experienced person for the job.

- **Non-discrimination means increased productivity.** Employees who are happy and secure in their jobs, and who do not have to spend time hiding who they are for fear of discrimination, perform their jobs better and more quickly compared to those employees who are unhappy. Protections prohibiting employee discrimination reduce the level of anxiety caused by job insecurity. Extending the law to include sexual orientation and gender identity would likely boost the feeling of job security amongst LGBT people, which will in turn boost productivity of these individuals, their work teams, their companies, and collectively, the nation.
- **ENDA applies to the same entities covered under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.** These include private employers with 15 or more employees, federal, state and local governments, labor unions and employment agencies. The Armed Forces, religious institutions and employers with less than 15 employees are exempt from this law.

Important Notes:

- As of publication in July 2010, the House version has 202 cosponsors and the Senate version has 45 cosponsors.
- The bill awaits markup in the House Education and Labor Committee where it may undergo changes during this process.
- On Wednesday, September 23, 2009, U.S. Rep. George Miller (D-CA), chairman of the House Education and Labor Committee, chaired the first full committee hearing in the House of Representatives on ENDA.
- On Thursday, November 5, 2009, U.S. Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA), chairman of the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, chaired the first full committee hearing in the Senate on a transgender-inclusive ENDA.
- For more information on PFLAG's commitment to workplace fairness, please visit www.pflag.org/workplace.



Every Child Deserves a Family Act (ECDF)

Bill Number:

Introduced in the House as H.R. 4806 by Representative Pete Stark (D-CA) on March 10, 2010. As of press time, this bill has not yet been introduced in the Senate, but introduction is anticipated in this session.

What this Bill Will Do:

The Every Child Deserves a Family (ECDF) Act would prohibit any child welfare service provider receiving federal assistance and involved in adoption or foster care placements from discriminating against prospective adoptive or foster parents solely on the basis of their sexual orientation, gender identity, or marital status, or on the basis of the sexual orientation or gender identity of the child involved.

The bill also requires the Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) to provide support for service providers to ensure understanding of the legal, practice, and culture changes required by this Act in making foster care and adoption placement decisions. The General Accounting Office is also required to complete a study and report to Congress on whether states have substantially complied with this Act in eliminating policies, practices, or laws that deny adoption rights on the basis of these criteria.

What You Need to Ask For:

Ask your Members of Congress to support this bill, especially if they serve on the House Ways & Means Committee or the Senate Finance Committee. If they are not a co-sponsor of the bill, ask them to support it by co-sponsoring. If they are already a co-sponsor please be sure to thank them. If you work with an adoption and foster care agency, please be sure to contact our the PFLAG National Office to learn about ways you can help advance this important legislation.

PFLAG Talking Points:

- **This bill increases the number of safe and supportive homes available to children.** ECDF is a federal bill that increases the number of qualified individuals eligible to become adoptive or foster parents by restricting federal funding for states employing discriminatory practices in adoption and foster care placements based on sexual orientation, gender identity or marital status. Enacting the bill would increase adoptions rates, as well as establishing permanency and decreasing risk factors for youth in foster care yielding an annual cost savings between \$3-\$6 billion.
- **This legislation is about putting the best interests of the child first.** ECDF, a child welfare bill, promotes the best interests of the children in the foster care system by increasing their access to the safe and supportive homes of more than 2,000,000 additional LGBT people who would

consider serving as foster or adoptive parents but face barriers due to existing state laws, regulations and policies prohibiting them from doing so.

- **Right now, the lack of uniform protections eliminates good parents from opening their homes for completely arbitrary reasons.** The majority of states lack non-discrimination policies and remain silent on how prospective LGBT foster and adoptive parents are to be considered. Moreover, many states like Florida, Utah, Mississippi, Nebraska and Utah have policies and practices that adversely impact LGBT and unmarried parents. This lack of clear guidance leaves children vulnerable to the individual biases of agencies and case workers and has resulted in children being denied the benefit
- **LGBT parents are already successfully raising happy, healthy children.** Approximately 1 million LGBT parents are already raising about 2 million children in the U.S. according to data taken from the 2000 Census. An estimated 27% of same-sex couples have at least one child under 18 living in their home. Some states already apply non-discrimination principles in their foster care and adoption practices to great success. Currently, some states – CA, MD, MA, NV, NJ, and NY – affirmatively allow same-sex couples to adopt jointly.
- **Scientific research supports the goals of this bill.** More than 30 years of scientific research overwhelmingly confirms that children raised in LGBT-headed household have the same advantages and same expectations for health, social and psychological adjustment, and development as children whose parents are heterosexual.

Important Notes:

- As of publication in July 2010, the House version of this bill has 26 cosponsors and the Senate version has xx cosponsors.
- The bill is in the first stage of the legislative process where it is being considered in the House Ways & Means Committee and the Senate Finance Committee where it may undergo changes in markup sessions.
- A broad range of social service, professional and advocacy organizations have expressed support for LGBT parenting, including the American Psychological Association, the American Bar Association, the Child Welfare League of America, the American, American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, American Academy of Family Physicians, American Academy of Pediatrics, American Psychiatric Association, American Medical Association, National Association of Social Workers, and the North American Council on Adoptable Children.
- For more information on PFLAG's commitment to family acceptance issues, please visit www.pflag.org/familyacceptance.



Safe Schools Improvement Act (SSIA)

Bill Number:

Introduced in the House as H.R. 2262 by Representative Barbara Lee (D-CA) on May 5, 2009. Senate introduction is pending. Please check the PFLAG website for the most update information.

What this Bill Will Do:

The Safe Schools Improvement Act would amend the Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities Act, which is part of the No Child Left Behind Act to instruct school districts to implement a comprehensive anti-bullying policy that includes specific enumeration for sexual orientation and gender identity or expression as well as require states to include bullying and harassment data in the statewide needs assessments.

What You Need to Ask For

Ask your congressmembers to support this bill. If they are not a co-sponsor of the bill, ask him/her to co-sponsor the bill. Be sure to encourage them to include SSIA in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) reauthorization bill, which would strengthen this law's school climate provisions. If you work for or with a local school community, please contact the PFLAG National Office to learn about ways you can help advance this important legislation.

PFLAG Talking Points

- **Bullying and harassment plague our nation's schools.** According to the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN)'s 2007 *School Climate Survey*, more than two-thirds of LGBT students report feeling unsafe in school, and yet only ten states have legislation that protects students against anti-LGBT bullying and harassment.
- **Comprehensive anti-bullying and harassment policies work.** The *School Climate Survey* also reported that students in states with school policies that don't specifically include sexual orientation, gender identity and expression (in other words, *enumerated policies*) are no more protected from bullying than students who live in states without any anti-bullying and/or harassment laws (40.8 percent with generic policies vs. 39.8 percent with no policies report "often or frequently" hearing verbal harassment based on sexual orientation).
- **The bill cultivates respect to create safer schools.** The bill provides language ensuring that all students have a safe learning environment which helps reduce the nation's growing drop-out rate. Research shows that bullying and harassment are serious problems that impede students' academic progress and overall mental health. The *School Climate Survey* also found that nearly one-third of all students are bullied at least once a month and that one out of every 10 high school drop-outs left school because of repeated bullying.

Important Notes

- As of publication in July 2010, the House version has 115 cosponsors.
- The bill is in the first stage of the legislative process where it is being considered in committee and may undergo changes in markup sessions. The bill has been referred to the House Education and Labor Committee along with two subcommittees – the Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education Subcommittee and the Healthy Families and Communities Subcommittee.
- A broad range of educational and non-educational organizations have expressed support for the Safe Schools Improvement Act, including the American Library Association, the National PTA, the American Federation of Teachers, Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, GLSEN, the National Council of La Raza, and the Human Rights Campaign.
- For more information on cultivating safe schools, please visit www.pflag.org/safeschools.



Student Non-Discrimination Act (SNDA)

Bill Number:

Introduced in the House as H.R. 4530 by Representative Jared Polis, (D-CO) on January 27, 2010, and in the Senate as S. 3390 by Senator Al Franken (D-MN) on May 20, 2010.

What this Bill Will Do:

The Student Non-Discrimination Act (SNDA) would establish a comprehensive Federal prohibition of discrimination in public schools based on actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. SNDA would provide protections for LGBT students and ensure that all students have access to public education in a safe environment free from discrimination, including harassment, bullying, intimidation, and violence. SNDA would also provide meaningful and effective remedies (loss of federal funding and legal cause of action for victims) for discrimination in public schools based on actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity, modeled after Title IX.

What you Need to Ask for:

Ask your Members of Congress to support this bill, especially if they serve on the House Education and Labor Committee or the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee. If they are not a co-sponsor of the bill, ask him/her to support it by co-sponsoring. If they are already a co-sponsor please thank them. If you work for or with a local school community, please contact the PFLAG National Office to learn about ways you can help advance this important legislation.

PFLAG Talking Points:

- **Discrimination harms our students and our education system.** Every day, students who are or who are perceived to be LGBT are subjected to pervasive discrimination, including harassment, bullying, intimidation, and violence, which is harmful to both students and our education system. Surveys indicate as many as nine in 10 LGBT students have been bullied. Having explicit non-discrimination policies protecting students who are or are perceived to be LGBT gives teachers and administrator the tools they need to protect all students.
- **LGBT students lack legal protections.** While Federal civil rights statutes expressly address discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, disability, or national origin, they do not explicitly include sexual orientation or gender identity and, as a result, LGBT students and parents have often had limited legal recourse when they experience discrimination.
- **The bill cultivates respect to create safer schools.** The bill provides language ensuring that all students have a safe learning environment which helps reduce the nation's growing drop-out rate. Research shows that bullying and harassment are serious problems that impede students' academic progress and overall mental health. Left unchecked, discrimination can lead, and has led, to life-threatening violence and to suicide. And when school officials engage in a

discriminatory treatment, or are indifferent to harassing behavior, LGBT students' constitutional rights are infringed upon.

Important Notes:

- As of publication in July 2010, the House version of this bill has 118 cosponsors and the Senate version has 23 cosponsors.
- The bill is in the first stage of the legislative process where it is being considered in the House Education and Labor Committee and the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee where it may undergo significant changes in markup sessions.
- A broad range of social service, professional and advocacy organizations have expressed support for this legislation including the American Association of University Women, the American Civil Liberties Union, the American Counseling Association, the American Federation of Teachers, the NAACP, the National Association of School Psychologists, the National Association of Secondary School Principals, the National Education Association, the National Women's Law Center, and the School Social Work Association of America.
- For more information on cultivating safe schools, please visit www.pflag.org/safeschools.



Ending Health Disparities for LGBT Americans Act of 2009

Bill Number:

Introduced in the House as H.R. 3001 by Representative Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) on June 23, 2009. This bill has yet to be introduced in the Senate.

What this Bill Will Do:

The Ending Health Disparities Act for LGBT Americans Act would address the health disparities experienced by LGBT Americans by eliminating the barriers they face in accessing quality health care, ensuring that good health and well-being is accessible to all. The legislation establishes non-discrimination policies for all federal health programs, provides funding for cultural competence training for health care providers, extends Medicare benefits to same-sex domestic partners, creates a new Office of LGBT Health within in the Department of Health and Human Services, and provides funding for community health centers who serve the LGBT community, along with investing in data collection and research.

What You Need to Ask For:

Ask your legislator to support this bill. If your Representative is not listed under the cosponsors of the bill, ask him or her to cosponsor H.R. 3001. If your Representative is part of the Committee on Energy and Commerce, ask him or her to give this bill a hearing. If you are meeting with a Senator ask him/her to be an original co-sponsor of a companion bill in the Senate.

PFLAG Talking Points:

- **Healthcare provider discrimination must stop.** Health care providers can currently decline to treat or provide certain necessary treatments, to individuals based on their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. We must institute non-discrimination policies for all health care provided by the federal government.
- **Our families need and deserve competent healthcare services.** Many providers simply lack the knowledge base to provide appropriate care for the LGBT community. The federal government should support these providers – such as hospitals, community-based clinics, and long term care facilities – with support they need to treat all patients appropriately.
- **Investment in LGBT healthcare is critical.** Currently, no federal health survey or federal health program collects data on sexual orientation and gender identity, leaving gaping holes in our knowledge base on LGBT health. The federal government must have basic information on the health of all Americans, including LGBT individuals.

- **Federal prevention programs leave LGBT Americans behind.** Current statutory limitations prevent comprehensive discussions of sexuality in federally funded prevention and sexual education efforts. Ignoring discussions of sexuality and the existence of sexual minorities intentionally dismiss the existence of LGBT Americans, the realities of their lives, and their critical health information needs, which ultimately increases risky behaviors. We must end this exclusion.

Important Notes:

- This bill was introduced for the first time in the 111th Congress, and as of this publication in July 2010, it currently has 23 cosponsors in the House.
- The bill was Referred to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, and in addition to the Committees on Armed Services, the Judiciary, Ways and Means, Oversight and Government Reform, House Administration, Education and Labor, Veterans' Affairs, Transportation and Infrastructure, Intelligence (Permanent Select), and Foreign Affairs, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.
- For more information on PFLAG's commitment to ending health disparities, please visit www.pflag.org/health.



The Military Readiness Enhancement Act of 2009

Bill Number:

Introduced in the House as H.R. 1283 by Representative Ellen Tauscher (D-CA) on March 3, 2009, and in the Senate as S. 3065 by Senator Joseph Lieberman (I-CT) on March 3, 2010.

What this Bill Will Do:

The Military Readiness Enhancement Act would amend Title 10 of the United States Code by repealing the current discriminatory military “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” (DADT) policy and replacing it with a military policy of non-discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. The legislation would not only end discrimination in the armed forces and strengthen our national security by utilizing the patriotism and talents of all who wish to serve, but it would save the military and the taxpayers millions of dollars that could be put to better use.

What You Need to Ask For:

Ask your Member of Congress to support this bill by voting in support of the National Defense Authorization Act (H.R. 2647/S. 1390), which includes language to repeal DADT. When requesting their support, be sure to reiterate your support of repealing DADT and urge your Member of Congress to include language to implement a non-discrimination policy for lesbian, gay and bisexual service members.

PFLAG Talking Points:

- **Our LGBT loved ones should be able to serve openly and honestly.** Sexual orientation is not a factor in one’s commitment to protecting the nation and defending freedom for all.
- **Military readiness is enhanced and our nation is stronger when every qualified American who wants to serve is allowed to do so.** Our military strength has been immeasurably damaged by the removal of more than 800 specialists with critical skills because of this policy.
- **The military is wasting American tax dollars on its discriminatory practices.** According to the U.S. General Accounting Office, the cost of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” is over 191 million dollars. Those dollars could be better used for our nation’s defense, not on the military’s discriminatory practices.
- **Americans support the repeal of the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy.** Sixty-nine percent of civilians support allowing LGBT people to serve openly according to a 2009 Gallup Poll.

Important Notes:

- As of publication in July 2010, the House version of this bill has 192 cosponsors and the Senate version has 33 cosponsors.
- The House has approved adding repeal language to the National Defense Authorization Act (H.R. 5136) with a vote of 234-194 (with 10 members not voting). Additionally, the Senate Armed Services Committee voted to approve the repeal language to the Senate version of the bill with a vote of 16-12. As of this publication in July 2010, we expect the full Senate to vote on the National Defense Authorization Act, which will include repeal language. We encourage you to contact your Senators to express your support for this legislation until this vote takes place.
- *Important Note:* This bill does not include protections for transgender or gender non-conforming individuals. Issues related to gender identity and/or gender expression may come up at the time of enlistment, appointment or commissioning into the Armed Forces, or may arise for personnel already serving in the military. The military has a very binary view of gender. Therefore, their rules and regulations, including the language they use, reflect this fairly conservative view. If a servicemember or recruit does not fit into stereotypical gender norms and roles, there may be consequences for that member or recruit. PFLAG is working with the Servicemembers Legal Defense Network (SLDN) to address this problem.
- For more information on PFLAG's commitment to ensuring the military ends its discriminatory practices towards LGBT service members, please visit www.pflag.org/military.



Uniting American Families Act of 2010

Bill Number:

The bill was introduced in the House as H.R. 1024 by Representative Jerold Nadler, (D-NY), and in the Senate as S. 424 by Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT) on February 12, 2009.

What this Bill Will Do:

The Uniting American Families Act would amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to allow a U.S. citizen to sponsor their foreign same-sex partner for immigration benefits under the same rules and regulations that married couples currently enjoy. UAFA provides measure to prevent fraud and guarantee that real families are utilizing the benefits. UAFA would impose harsh penalties for fraud, including up to five years in prison and as much as \$250,000 in fines and if the partnership is dissolved in less than two years, the legal immigrant status of the partner would be revoked.

What You Need to Ask For:

Urge your Members of Congress to support the Uniting American Families Act and stop bi-national families from being torn apart.

PFLAG Talking Points:

- **Current immigration law deficiencies are tearing our families apart.** Many LGBT people fall in love with a foreign national of the same sex and seek to build a life and family with that individual, but because U.S. immigration law does not recognize same-sex relationships couples are often forced to separate or move abroad in order to stay together, dividing families.
- **People shouldn't have to choice between their country and their partners.** Bi-national lesbian and gay couples often have to make the terrible choice between choosing to separate from their life-partners or leave the country to live with the person they love. It is un-American to have to choose between family and country.
- **Federal immigration policy must promote family unity.** We should honor the principle of family unity – a critical piece to federal immigration policy – by providing all Americans with the opportunity to be with their loved ones.

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Important Notes

- As of publication in July 2010, the House version of this bill has 124 cosponsors and the Senate version has 23 cosponsors.
- The bill is currently with the House Committee on the Judiciary's Immigration, Citizenship, Refugees, Border Security, and International Law Subcommittee. On the Senate side, the bill has been referred to the Committee on the Judiciary.
- On June 3,, 2009, the Senate Committee on the Judiciary held a hearing entitled, "[Uniting Americans Families Act: Addressing Inequality in Federal Immigration Law.](#)"
- For more information on PFLAG's commitment to immigration equality, please visit www.pflag.org/relationshipbenefits.



Responsible Education About Life (REAL) Act of 2009

Bill Number:

Introduced in the House as H.R. 1551 by Representative Barbara Lee, (D-CA) and in the Senate as S. 611 by Senator Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ) on March 17, 2009.

What This Bill Will Do:

States can only receive federal funding for sexuality education if they agree to teach abstinence-only-until-marriage, which routinely excludes critical information about the health benefits of contraception to prevent pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. Because abstinence means “no sex until marriage”, LGBT individuals are excluded from these important lessons.

The REAL Act would authorize the first federal programs for comprehensive, honest sex education. It would provide funding for states to implement comprehensive approaches that include information about both abstinence and contraception and condoms, allowing perspectives of both values and public health.

What You Need to Ask For:

Ask your representative and senators to support this bill. If they are not currently a cosponsor of the REAL Act, ask that they become one. Contact members of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce or the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor & Pensions to urge passage to full House & Senate vote.

PFLAG Talking Points:

- **Abstinence-only programs exclude LGBT youth by design.** The federal definition of “abstinence education” promotes marriage as the only acceptable family structure; in a society that generally prohibits same-sex couples from marrying, the focus on marriage creates a hostile learning environment for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) youth and children of LGBT or single parents. The programs completely ignore the existence of LGBT youth, the realities of their lives, and their specific health needs. In fact, since abstinence programs address only heterosexual relationships, too many LGBT youth assume that the safe sex message does not apply to them.
- **Science-based sex education programs work.** After nearly 10 years and approximately \$1.5 billion, abstinence-only-until-marriage programs have been shown to be ineffective and dangerously inaccurate. It has been estimated that the public costs associated with teen birth in the United States were at least \$9.1 billion in 2004. Furthermore, the cost for treatment of the

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over nine million cases of STIs and HIV that occurred among young people ages 15–24 in 2000 was \$6.5 billion (in year 2000 dollars). Clearly abstinence education programs are disastrous, and the public health costs incurred are simply unacceptable when preventative remedies such as comprehensive sex education is available and proven to be effective.

- **We have a responsibility to empower educators to provide accurate information.** Educators must be allowed and encouraged to present programs that are based on effective, science-based information, that demonstrate respect for the diversity of values and beliefs represented in the community, in a way that complements the education children receive from their families.
- **Fund comprehensive sex education.** While there are three separate federal funding streams dedicated to abstinence-only-until-marriage programs, no federal funding currently exists specifically for comprehensive sexuality education. It's time to fund age appropriate, medically accurate and comprehensive sex education.

Important Notes:

- As of publication in July 2010, the House version of this bill has 100 cosponsors and the Senate version has 15 cosponsors.
- The bill is currently with the House Committee on Energy and Commerce and the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions.
- To get more detailed information on Comprehensive Sex Education, visit www.pflag.org/real.



The Domestic Partnership Benefits and Obligations (DPBO) Act

Bill Number:

Introduced in the House as H.R. 2517 by Representative Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) and in the Senate as S. 1102 by Senator Joseph Lieberman (I-CT) on May 20, 2009.

What this Bill Will Do:

The Domestic Partnership Benefits and Obligations Act (DPBO) would provide the same family benefits to lesbian and gay federal civilian employees as are already provided to the partners of married heterosexual couples. To receive benefits, employees would have to submit an affidavit of eligibility for benefits with the Office of Personnel Management, certifying that the employee and domestic partner meet necessary criteria, as provided in the Act.

What You Need to Ask For:

It is time to bring employment practices in the federal government in line with those of America's largest and most successful corporations. Please be sure to ask your House and Senate Congress members to support this bill. If your Congress members are not a co-sponsor of the bill please ask them to co-sponsor it.

PFLAG Talking Points:

- **Much of corporate America successfully provides domestic partner benefits.** It is time to bring employment practices in the federal government in line with those of America's largest and most successful corporations. 59% of Fortune 500 companies provide domestic partner benefits to their employees. In addition, 16 states and over 200 local governments offer their public employees domestic partnership benefits.
- **The public supports health insurance extensions.** A May 2000 poll conducted by the Associated Press found that a majority of Americans favor the extension of health insurance coverage to same-sex partners.
- **A broad coalition supports this legislation.** In addition, this legislation has been endorsed by the American Federation of Government Employees, American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, Harvard University, National Treasury Employees Union, and the United Church of Christ.

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Important Notes

- As of this publication in July 2010, the House version of this bill has 140 cosponsors and the Senate version has 31 cosponsors.
- The bill passed out of the House Committee on Oversight and Government on January 22, 2010 with a vote of 23-12, and in the Senate Committee on Homeland Security on December 16, 2009 with a vote of 8-1. It awaits a full floor vote in both the House and the Senate.
- To get more information on PFLAG's commitment to workplace fairness, please visit www.pflag.org/workplace.



PFLAG's Administrative Priorities

While the country has certainly witnessed promising changes extending certain rights to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people over the past few decades, many significant barriers still exist before all LGBT people can achieve full equality and fair treatment under the law. With a new administration leading our country, we are confident that both PFLAG National's work in D.C., coupled with your grassroots lobbying efforts will continue to influence the President, leading our country into a new era of greater equality and opportunity.

In order to achieve full equality and fair treatment, it is important to challenge the existing barriers in federal programs, policies, and services that have put misinformation, denial and ignorance about sexual orientation and gender identity into laws. Even with the progress we have witnessed over the past year, there are still some key federal programs that persistently fail to acknowledge and meet the real needs of LGBT people leading to inadequate delivery of critical services, too often leaving LGBT people more vulnerable to inequality in education, employment, housing, and public accommodations.

To overcome these disparities, PFLAG leadership continues to work with the current administration, sharing recommended changes that can be executed by the President immediately. By adopting these recommendations, equality will be extended to our LGBT loved ones, enabling them to fully participate in all aspects of American life. Our recommendations focus primarily on five broad priorities:

- Family/Caregiver Acceptance and Support
- Cultivating Respect to Create Safer Schools
- Access to Comprehensive LGBT Healthcare
- Supporting Safer Housing Options
- Access to Equal Employment Opportunities

Already, our work has helped achieve several extraordinary administrative gains for our families over the course of the last year. With the assistance of your advocacy, President Obama has instituted administrative changes that directly impact LGBT people, their families, friends and allies. Some of these changes include:

- The extension of family medical leave act (FMLA) benefits to LGBT families which allows same-sex partners to take leave to care for a sick or newborn child or family member

- A directive mandating hospital visitation rights for same-sex domestic partners
- Additional benefits extended to the same-sex domestic partners of federal employees including long-term care insurance, relocation expenses, and reimbursements for healthcare premiums
- The State Department's new gender change policy for U.S. Passports enabling transgender people to access appropriate identity documentation
- Greater equity for same-sex couples in the administration of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) programs such as the section 8 voucher program and fair housing law enforcement.

Even with all of the tremendous progress, there is still much to accomplish. The next few pages detail some of the action we must take. They provide you with a description of the current obstacles, several recommendations on how to make a fair change, along with ways for you to directly influence leaders by sharing your stories and concerns. These recommendations include concrete steps you can take, and are all the more urgent in the current economic recovery, since so many of our friends and families are in greater need of accessing federal benefits that they are entitled to in these tough times, no matter their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Family/Caregiver Acceptance and Support

Issue:

Increasingly LGBT youth are coming out at younger and younger ages. The Administration must acknowledge this trend and administer resources to effective programs supporting families whose loved ones have recently come out to them. Research has demonstrated that adverse family reactions often lead to lower self-esteem and at-risk behaviors such as drug use, unsafe sex and suicide. Outside of the familial environment, violence, discrimination and marginalization in schools and other social settings often traumatize LGBT young people with long-term consequences for health and development, impacting families as well as the targeted individuals. Existing evidence-based programs provide opportunities to support and strengthen families with LGBT loved ones. Such programs should receive federal support since they are proven to help families and caregivers better understand and fully accept their loved ones, vastly improving their overall health and well-being.

Administrative Recommendations:

- **Support culturally competent workforce training.** Support and mandate workplace and professional development trainings, such as PFLAG's *Straight for Equality in the Workplace* training, for service providers of federally-funded programs working with LGBT youth and families. (Service providers include, but are not limited to, health, mental health, and school-based providers, child welfare, juvenile justice, family service workers and other community service providers.)
- **Distribute support-focused resource guides.** Authorize funding to provide support-focused resource guides to appropriate service providers of federally funded programs in an effort to better support LGBT children and adolescents.
- **Mandate application of research.** Mandate the application of existing LGBT inclusive, family/caregiver acceptance research to federal family-based programs ensuring the inclusivity and safety of such programs.
- **Include LGBT people in data collection.** Improve official information gathering by including questions about a person's sexual orientation or gender identity, including transgender identities. We need data inclusion on basic surveys including but not limited to the Youth Behavioral Risk Survey (YBRS) and the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS).

What You Can Do to Help:

You can help influence the administration by using our sample letter on page 39, inserting the above issue and recommendations in the appropriate places and sending a letter to these offices:

Attn: President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500
Website: www.whitehouse.gov
Phone: (202) 456-1414

Attn: Secretary Kathleen Sebelius
US Dept. of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20201
Website: www.dhhs.gov
Phone: (202) 690-7000

Cultivating Respect to Create Safer Schools

Issue:

Across the country we have a patchwork of policies regarding school safety. Where we all can agree is that schools should be safe for all students. Our goal would be to create policy that specifically lists categories of people that are affected by bullying (tied to categories in new federal hate crimes law) that will allow for education and training to specifically address the behaviors and the underlying causes of bullying. In addition to creating enumerated policy, we must encourage the President to include culturally competent diversity trainings and enhanced sexual orientation and gender identity non-discrimination policies to be enforced in all public schools.

Administrative Recommendations:

- **Support culturally-competent school training.** Support school and professional development trainings and mandate such programs for students, faculty and staff along with PTA and school board associations.
- **Inform school-based programs.** Inform school-based wellness, mental health, and prevention programs with risk behavior statistics and research ([such as Caitlin Ryan's Suicide Prevention Resource Center Study](#)) to establish guidelines and practices for addressing risks including family acceptance training and education
- **Include LGBT students in data collection.** Incorporate questions into the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) and the National Center for Education Statistics – amongst other federal survey tools – to develop comprehensive statistics that will help serve LGBT youth in the future.
- **Mandate studies examining truancy.** Mandate studies that measure student truancy, drop-out rates and students' grades in relation to students feeling safe in school.
- **Report Incidents of Bullying and Harassment.** Please visit PFLAG's "Claim Your Rights" webpage to learn more about how to document school-based bullying and harassment if your family is struggling to effectively address the issue.

What You Can Do to Help:

If you are concerned about this priority, you can help influence the administration by using our sample letter on page 39, inserting the above issue and recommendations in the appropriate place and sending a letter to the following offices:

Attn: President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500
Website: www.whitehouse.gov
Phone: (202) 456-1414

Attn: Secretary Arne Duncan
US Dept. of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20202
Website: www.ed.gov
Phone: (202) 401-3000

Access to Comprehensive LGBT Healthcare

Issue:

As the new Administration begins to implement the recently passed health care reform legislation, we must ensure that all Americans, including our LGBT family and friends, have equal access to the full range of health promotion, prevention, and treatment services. Persistent stigma and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity have led to decades of obstructed access to LGBT-affirmative and culturally competent healthcare, and have created negative impacts on the overall health and well-being of LGBT individuals. LGBT people often encounter significant barriers that prevent them from accessing the vital healthcare services necessary for even routine care. We have provided a few recommendations on what the administration can do immediately to help ensure that comprehensive healthcare is accessible to all Americans.

Administrative Recommendations:

- **Include LGBT individuals and families when implementing healthcare reform.** Definitions must be written to remove barriers that prevent LGBT individuals from accessing healthcare. In particular, it's important to expand the definition of terms like "family," "parent," and "spouse" to be inclusive of LGBT families to make it easier for all individuals and families to access the rights and benefits they are entitled. As long as the federal government's definition of families excludes LGBT households, same-sex partners who have entered into domestic partnerships and civil unions will not be able to access healthcare through programs designed to cover families, such as the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP).
- **Mandate healthcare coverage and services for transgender individuals.** Transgender and gender non-conforming people must be afforded access to basic healthcare that acknowledges their gender identity without prejudice or negative consequences. Many insurance plans still routinely refuse coverage for a wide-range of medically necessary treatments by excluding "transgender-related services" and denying coverage for any medical expenses that could be interpreted as relating to "sex reassignment." Such policies discourage individuals from seeking treatment, including primary care, for fear that they could lose their insurance (if insured) or face ridicule and discrimination when attempting to access services.
- **Include LGBT individuals in healthcare data collection.** Historically, health data collection efforts have not included LGBT populations or gathered information regarding the specific healthcare needs of LGBT people. Consequently, all new or updated national forms or data collection tools must be inclusive of all sexual orientations and gender identities. For example, forms must include the option to choose a same-sex partner versus a spouse, or to choose "transgender female" or "transgender male" (or other transgender inclusive identification options that may be determined by researchers) under demographic gender questions, or for an individual to name "parent 1" and "parent 2" as opposed to "mother" and "father."

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- **Effectively address the changing challenges in the HIV/AIDS Epidemic.** Gay and bisexual men and transgender individuals (especially individuals of color, transgender women, and youth) are at particular risk for HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs). The Administration must continue its work in developing a truly comprehensive National AIDS Strategy designed to lower HIV incidence, increase access to HIV/AIDS care, and reduce racial disparities in the epidemic among LGBT populations. It should also integrate HIV/AIDS with prevention and treatment programs for other STIs, viral hepatitis, and tuberculosis wherever possible.

What You Can Do to Help:

If you are concerned about this priority, you can help influence the administration by using our sample letter on page 39, inserting the above issue and recommendations in the appropriate place and sending a letter to the following offices:

Attn: President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500
Website: www.whitehouse.gov
Phone: (202) 456-1414

Attn: Secretary Kathleen Sebelius
US Dept. of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20201
Website: www.dhhs.gov
Phone: (202) 690-7000

Supporting Safer Housing Options

Issue:

There is a disproportionately higher percentage of homeless LGBT youth, and shelter and foster care systems often exclude them or perpetuate violence and stigma against them. The housing crisis and increasing stress on families means more LGBT young people are likely to be seeking shelter in our public system. We must encourage the President to ensure that existing programs are inclusive of LGBT young people's needs.

Administrative Recommendations:

- **Ensure inclusivity of programs and services.** Provide inclusive and welcoming social services and safer housing options for runaway and homeless LGBT young people.
- **Support culturally-competent workforce training.** Support specific trainings and mandate such programs for service providers of federally funded programs working with LGBT youth and adults along with family reunification programs.
- **Improve survey sampling of homeless youth.** Develop survey methodologies that measure the universe of homeless youth – including LGBT youth – and assess their specific needs.
- **Evaluate the efficacy of LGBT housing models.** Research the efficacy of various housing models and programs aimed at reducing the rate of LGBT homeless and runaway youth (such as the Ali Forney Center, the Attic, Green Chimneys, Sylvia's Place, etc.) to determine best practices in developing a more comprehensive long-term strategy.
- **Implement inclusive long-term homeless youth strategy.** Implement [Opening Doors](#), a long-term strategy for responding to the needs of homeless youth – inclusive of LGBT young people – through improved coordination and collaboration between federal, state, and community-based programs that serve runaway and homeless youth.

What You Can Do to Help:

If you are concerned about this priority, you can help influence the administration by using our sample letter on page 39, inserting the above issue and recommendations in the appropriate place and sending a letter to the following offices:

Attn: President Barack Obama

The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500
Website: www.whitehouse.gov
Phone: (202) 456-1414

Attn: Secretary Shaun Donovan

US Dept. of Housing and Urban Development
451 7th Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20410

Attn: Secretary Kathleen Siebelius

US Dept. of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20201
Website: www.dhhs.gov
Phone: (202) 690-7000

Website: www.hud.gov
Phone: (202)708-1422

Access to Equal Employment Opportunities

Issue:

Every day, LGBT employees face discrimination in their place of employment because of their real or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity and/or gender expression. While federal law protects against employment discrimination based on race, gender, religion, national origin, and disability, there are no federal laws that protect LGBT people from discrimination in the workplace. Because employment discrimination goes beyond firing practices, we have outlined the following recommendations.

Administrative Recommendations

- **Eliminate gender “no-match” letters.** When employer-submitted information does not match the Social Security Administration’s database that houses personal information like name, DOB and gender, a “no-match” letter is sent to the employer. When employers have a gender marker listed in employee records, which differs from the SSA database, a no-match letter indicating the gender mismatch may be sent. Such letters “out” transgender and gender non-conforming candidates to their potential employers and unfairly jeopardize qualified transgender and gender nonconforming people from accessing jobs.
- **Ensure inclusivity of programs and services.** Provide culturally-competent social service programs such as job training, substance abuse, or mental health treatment services offered through Disability and other federal programs for LGBT individuals.
- **Support culturally-competent workforce training.** Support specific trainings and mandate such programs for service providers of federally funded programs, ensuring that program services are inclusive of LGBT individuals.

What You Can Do to Help

If you are concerned about this priority, you can help influence the administration by using our sample letter on page 39, inserting the above issue and recommendations in the appropriate place and sending a letter to the following offices:

Attn: President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500
Website: www.whitehouse.gov
Phone: (202) 456-1414

Attn: Secretary Hilda Solis
US Department of Labor
200 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20210
Website: www.dol.gov
Phone: (202) 693-6000

Sample Letter to the Administration

Re: [*Insert PFLAG Administrative Priority*]

Attn: [*Title*][*First Name*] [*Last Name*]

[*Insert Target Department*]

[*Insert Street Address*]

[*Insert City, State Zip*]



Dear [*Title*] [*First Name*] [*Last Name*],

On behalf of Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) [*insert chapter name here*], I thank you for your leadership over the past year in moving our country into a new era of greater equality and opportunity. While the country has certainly witnessed progress for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people and their families over the past year, there is still much to accomplish before reaching full equality and fair treatment for all.

As you know, decision makers in the past have designed federal programs, policies and services that have institutionalized misinformation, denial and ignorance about sexual orientation and gender identity. These policy makers persistently failed to acknowledge the real needs of LGBT people in delivering adequate services, which made our loved ones vulnerable to disparities in education, employment, housing and public accommodations.

To overcome such disparities, I am recommending several administrative changes regarding [*insert PFLAG administrative priority here*] that can be executed immediately. These recommendations include:

- [*Insert recommendations #1 here*]
- [*Insert recommendations #2 here*]
- [*Insert recommendations #3 here*]

By adopting these fair changes, equality will be extended to our loved ones, enabling our families to fully participate in all aspects of American life. Your leadership has the potential to create a more just society for our LGBT loved ones. I strongly encourage you to consider implementing these important administrative changes today.

Thank you very much for considering the implementation of these important changes.

Sincerely,

[*Your Name*]

PFLAG [*chapter name*]

Sexual Orientation & Gender Identity Glossary

Gender Expression: Relates to how a person chooses to communicate their gender identity to others through clothing, hair, styles, mannerisms, etc. This communication may be conscious or subconscious. While most people's understandings of gender expressions relate to masculinity and femininity, there are countless combinations that may incorporate both masculine and feminine expressions, or neither, through androgynous expressions. The important thing to remember is that every gender expression is valid.

Gender Diverse, Gender Variant, or Gender Non-Conforming: A person who views their gender identity as one of many possible genders beyond strictly female or male sometimes identifies as genderqueer, gender fluid, gender neutral, bi-gendered, androgynous, or simply gender diverse. Such people feel that they exist psychologically between genders or beyond the notion of only male and female. People who feel this way may or may not pursue hormone therapy and/or surgical procedures and sometimes prefer using gender-neutral pronouns (e.g. ze, hir). Some gender non-conforming people are comfortable with their bodies as they are regardless of how they express their gender.

Gender Identity: A person's deeply held internal sense of being male or female or somewhere else on the gender spectrum. One's gender identity does not always correspond to biological sex (i.e., a person assigned female at birth identifies as male or a person assigned male at birth identifies as female). Awareness of gender identity is usually experienced in infancy and reinforced in adolescence.

Intersex/Disorders of Sex Development (DSD): Individuals born with chromosomal anomalies or ambiguous genitalia. In the past, medical professionals commonly assigned a male or female gender to the individual and proceeded to perform gender assignment surgeries beginning in infancy and often continuing into adolescence, before a child was able to give informed consent. The Intersex Society of North America opposes this practice of genital mutilation on infants and children. Please note: the medical term "hermaphrodite" has been used, but is not an acceptable term.

LGBT: Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender. This acronym is used to refer to these individuals collectively. (It is sometimes stated as GLBT.) Occasionally, the acronym is stated as LGBTQA to include allies – straight and supportive individuals – in the community.

Sexual Orientation: Sexual orientation or sexual identity describes the enduring emotional, romantic, and/or sexual feelings toward other people we are attracted to. Heterosexual (straight) individuals experience these feelings primarily for people of the opposite sex. Lesbian and gay individuals experience these feelings primarily for people of the same sex. Bisexual (bi) individuals experience these feelings for people of both sexes. It is important to note that sexual orientation is not the same as gender identity.

Transgender: A broad umbrella term used to describe those who transcend conventional expectations of gender identity or expression. Like any umbrella term, many different groups of people, with different histories and experiences, are often included within the greater transgender community – such groups include, but are certainly not limited to, people who identify as transsexual, genderqueer, gender variant, gender diverse, and androgynous.

PFLAG's Commitment to Transgender Inclusion

PFLAG is strongly committed to including our transgender loved ones and family in all that we do. In 1997, we became the first national LGBT organization to specifically include the transgender community in our mission statement, and, in 2002, the PFLAG board adopted a groundbreaking resolution that we will only support legislation that is inclusive of transgender Americans.

It is important that PFLAG supporters reiterate this strong support for inclusive legislation to lawmakers and educate elected leaders on why protecting our transgender family members is so essential. PFLAG supporters should also be aware that on issues such as adoption and foster care legislation, employment non-discrimination and safe schools, inclusion of gender identity and gender expression is vital...and an issue that PFLAG believes in deeply¹.

The PFLAG Policy Statement on Transgender Inclusion²

Long experience has shown that it is exceedingly difficult to broaden the scope of civil rights legislation to expand the protections provided for additional classes of persons, such as transgender, once those laws are in place. This means that any proposed legislation, however progressive and desirable, which does not include all the classes of persons in our mission statement and for whom we advocate will result in the exclusion of those persons from the benefits of such legislation for years to come, if not permanently.

The Board of Directors of Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays has, therefore, adopted the following policy:

“PFLAG can only support legislation that provides explicit inclusion of all who are included in our mission statement.”

¹ To get more detailed information on PFLAG's commitment to our transgender loved ones, please visit our Transgender Network website at www.pflag.org/tnet.

² Adopted by the PFLAG Board of Directors on September 27, 2002 and revised on October 18, 2003.

Frequently Asked Questions about Transgender Issues

What does “transgender” mean?

A broad umbrella term used to describe those who transcend conventional expectations of gender identity or expression. Like any umbrella term, many different groups of people, with different histories and experiences, get associated within the greater transgender community – such groups include, but are certainly not limited to, people who identify as transsexual, genderqueer, gender variant, gender diverse, and androgynous.

What is the difference between being transgender and being lesbian, gay or bisexual?

Being lesbian, gay or bisexual refers to one's sexual orientation or sexual identity. Sexual orientation describes who a person is attracted to and loves – it is not the same as gender identity. Gender identity is a person's internal sense of being male, female or something else. For many people, one's gender identity often corresponds with their biological sex (i.e., a person assigned female at birth identifies as female or a person assigned male at birth identifies as male). People whose gender identity corresponds with their biological sex are referred to as non-trans or cisgender (with *cis* being a Latin prefix meaning “on the same side.”) This differs from a transgender person whose gender identity does not correspond with the sex they were assigned at birth (i.e. a person assigned female at birth identifies as male or a person assigned male at birth identifies as female). *Trans* is a Latin prefix meaning “across or over.” A person's gender identity does not determine a person's sexual orientation. Just like a person who is non-trans, a transgender person can identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or straight.

When do most transgender people know that they are differently gendered?

Many transgender people remember “feeling different” from their earliest childhood memories. But because of stigma and lack of information, they can struggle for many years to accept this difference. As more information for transgender people becomes available, we are seeing transgender people openly expressing their true gender identity at younger ages.

What is the typical process of “transition” for transgender people?

There is no “typical” transition process because there are many different ways to transition - not all include physical changes. For transsexual people, the *Standards of Care* requires a “gender identity disorder” diagnosis, as defined by the American Psychological Association, in order to access medical treatments, hormones and various surgeries. This diagnosis is controversial in transgender communities, as it perpetuates stigma and medicalizes what many believe is simply another natural human variation.

How many transgender people are there in the United States?

Because the U.S. Census does not include “Transgender” as a category, it is very difficult to determine an accurate estimate of the number of transgender people in the country. However,

based on several studies, experts estimate that between 0.25% and 1% (750,000-3,000,000) of the U.S. population is transsexual; it follows, then, that the entire transgender population, which includes transsexuals among other gender diverse groups, is much larger than that.

How much diversity is there in the transgender population?

The transgender community includes people who identify as transsexual, transgender, crossdressers, genderqueer, bigender, androgynous, and others. There are female-to-male and male-to-female trans people. Further, there are transgender people of every race, ethnicity, socioeconomic class, age, and physical ability. Transgender people live all over the world: in rural, suburban and urban communities.

What common problems do transgender people face because of their gender identity?

Transgender people face harsh realities of violent hate crimes, workplace harassment and loss of employment, limited access to healthcare due to insurance exclusions, discrimination in housing and public accommodations, difficulty obtaining accurate identification documents, and higher rates of unemployment and homelessness as a result of such discrimination.

Why do lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people work together on civil rights legislation and public education?

While “sexual orientation” and “gender identity” are different, much of the discrimination facing lesbian, gay or bisexual people and transgender people—from hate-motivated violence to workplace harassment—is the same. Since the earliest days of the struggle for equality, lesbian, gay, and bisexual people have worked side by side with transgender to educate the public and win civil rights. Every lesbian, gay and bisexual rights organization has officially taken the stand that it supports a federal discrimination bill that will protect all LGBT people from discrimination in the workplace.

Here to Help You: PFLAG National Field & Policy Staff

As you prepare to visit your lawmaker, PFLAG National staffers are here to answer questions, give you important information on issues and provide insight on how to have the most effective meeting possible with your elected leaders.

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About PFLAG

Our Vision

We, the parents, families and friends of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons, celebrate diversity and envision a society that embraces everyone, including those of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities. Only with respect, dignity and equality for all will we reach our full potential as human beings, individually and collectively. PFLAG welcomes the participation and support of all who share in, and hope to realize this vision.

Our Mission

PFLAG promotes the health and well-being of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons, their families and friends through: support, to cope with an adverse society; education, to enlighten an ill-informed public; and advocacy, to end discrimination and to secure equal civil rights. Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays provides opportunity for dialogue about sexual orientation and gender identity, and acts to create a society that is healthy and respectful of human diversity.

Our Strategic Goals

- I. Build the capacity of our organization at every level so that we may have all the resources, in the form of information, people and funding, necessary to move forward in our work with the greatest possible effect.
- II. Create a world in which our young people may grow up and be educated with freedom from fear of violence, bullying and other forms of discrimination, regardless of their real or perceived gender identity or sexual orientation or that of their families.
- III. Make our vision and our message accessible to the broadest range of ethnic and cultural communities, ending the isolation of families with gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender family members within those communities.
- IV. Work toward full inclusion of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons within their chosen communities of faith.
- V. Create a society in which all GLBT persons may openly and safely pursue the career path of their choice, and may be valued and encouraged to grow to their full potential in the workplace.

- VI. Create a society in which all gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons may enjoy, in every aspect of their lives, full civil and legal equality and may participate fully in all the rights, privileges and obligations of full citizenship in this country.

We welcome the participation and support of all who share in our Vision and Mission and who hope to realize our goals.

Learn more about PFLAG

PFLAG has more than 200,000 members and supporters and 350+ chapters in states across the country.

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