March 24, 2014

The Honorable John Boehner
Speaker of the House of Representatives
Office of the Speaker
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Boehner:

On behalf of the 134,000 members and affiliates of the American Psychological Association (APA), I am writing to urge you to bring H.R. 1755, the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA), to the House floor for a vote. This critical legislation would prohibit employers from making decisions about hiring, firing, promoting, or compensating an employee on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity. The individuals who comprise our nation’s workforce should be judged solely on their job-related performance.

APA is the largest scientific and professional organization representing psychology in the United States and is the world’s largest association of psychologists. Our association has a longstanding commitment to ending discriminatory practices targeting lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) persons. Specifically, APA adopted a resolution on “Opposing Discriminatory Legislation and Initiatives Aimed at Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Persons” in 2007, and another policy statement on “Transgender, Gender Identity, and Gender Expression Non-Discrimination” in 2008. As stated in these resolutions, there is no basis for discrimination against LGBT individuals, and moreover, such unfair treatment is harmful to LGBT individuals’ mental health and the public good.

Psychological research has documented that people who accept and integrate their sexual and gender identities are better psychologically adjusted than those who do not. To promote psychological well-being among workers, individuals should have the opportunity to disclose personal information without the threat of negative ramifications. Furthermore, social psychological research has consistently found that heterosexuals who have interpersonal contact with LGBT individuals have more positive attitudes towards LGBT people as a group. Taken together, these findings suggest that allowing an atmosphere of intolerance based on sexual orientation or gender identity in the workplace is detrimental to LGBT individuals and their coworkers. In fact, the presence of LGBT coworkers does not undermine employee morale or relationships, but instead may strengthen worker rapport.
As it currently stands, 29 states do not provide protections against workplace discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, and 33 states lack employment protections for gender identity. Yet, the Williams Institute found nearly 30% of LGB people have experienced discrimination or harassment on the job, and transgender individuals report even higher rates of adverse job outcomes as a result of their gender identity. ENDA will help to resolve these problems by establishing a national policy of nondiscrimination for LGBT workers.

We hope you will allow for a vote on this very important legislation by bringing ENDA to the House floor before the end of the 113th Congress. If APA can be of assistance, please contact Leo Rennie, Senior Legislative and Federal Affairs Officer, in our Public Interest Government Relations Office, at (202) 682-5110 or lrennie@apa.org.

Sincerely,

Norman B. Anderson, PhD
Chief Executive Officer