



AMERICAN
PSYCHOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION

October 1, 2009

The Honorable Jeff Merkley
B40b Dirksen Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Merkley:

On behalf of the 150,000 members of the American Psychological Association (APA), I am writing to express our strong support for the *Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) of 2009* (S. 1584).

APA is the largest scientific and professional organization representing psychology in the United States and is the world's largest association of psychologists. Comprising researchers, educators, clinicians, consultants, and students, APA works to advance psychology as a science, a profession, and as a means of promoting health, education and human welfare.

APA has a longstanding commitment to ending discriminatory practices targeting lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered (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 (both enclosed for your consideration). As stated in these resolutions, not only is there no basis for discrimination against LGBT individuals, but also such discrimination is harmful to their mental health and the public good.

S. 1584, the *Employment Non-Discrimination Act of 2009*, lays a strong foundation for instituting a policy of nondiscrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in the U.S. workplace, consistent with anti-discrimination policies concerning race, gender, and disability status. In particular, this critical legislation would prohibit employers from making decisions about hiring, firing, promoting, or compensating an employee who belongs to a sexual or gender minority. As you probably know, it is currently legal to discriminate in the workplace based on sexual orientation in 29 states and in 38 states based on gender identity.

Psychological research supports the conclusion that people who accept and integrate their sexual orientation and gender identity are psychologically better 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, research has consistently found that heterosexuals who have contact

with LGBT populations have more positive attitudes towards LGBT people as a group. Taken together, these findings suggest that the presence of LGBT coworkers does not undermine employee morale or relationships, but rather may strengthen worker rapport.

Allowing an atmosphere of intolerance based on sexual orientation or gender identity in the workplace is detrimental for LGBT individuals as well as for everyone in the workplace. In addition, employment discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity inadvertently legitimizes other forms of prejudice and discrimination, including anti-gay violence.

In closing, we would like to thank you for your efforts in developing the *Employment Non-Discrimination Act of 2009*, and offer our association's assistance in furthering passage of this vital legislation. If you have any questions or would like more information, please contact Jutta Tobias, Ph.D., in our Government Relations Office, at (202) 336- 5668.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "GKeita".

Gwendolyn Puryear Keita, Ph.D.
Executive Director
Public Interest Directorate