

March 9, 2009

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
U.S. Senate
Senate Russell Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Leahy:

I am writing on behalf of the 150,000 members of the American Psychological Association (APA) to express our support for S. 424, the *Uniting American Families Act of 2009*.

APA is the largest scientific and professional organization representing psychology in the United States and is the world's largest association of psychologists. Comprised of 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.

Policies that discriminate against lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) individuals continue to be a serious problem in our country. This includes initiatives that limit access to the rights and responsibilities of marriage, restricting parental rights, and constraining access to legal recourse in the face of discrimination. The rhetoric surrounding the debates related to such policies tend to be grounded in unfounded and faulty arguments about LGBT people, often revive old stereotypes and prejudices; and portray LGBT persons as dangerous and threatening.

The *Uniting American Families Act of 2009* provides a strong foundation to remedy discriminatory immigration policies aimed at same-sex couples by allowing U.S. citizens and legal permanent residents to sponsor their same-sex partners in family-based immigration procedures. In particular, this legislation would extend the definition of persons eligible for family-based immigration sponsorship to "permanent partner," in addition to other-sex "spouses." Passage of this important legislation would constitute a critical step forward in providing equal rights to all Americans, regardless of their sexual orientation.

APA has a longstanding commitment to promoting policies to protect LGBT individuals from all types of discrimination. Research has shown that social support, including the support of spousal and family relationships, contributes significantly to the health and well-being of same-sex couples and their families. APA believes that the enactment of S.

424 will make an important contribution to the well-being of this population of families by strengthening the social support they receive.

Furthermore, APA passed a *Resolution on Opposing Discriminatory Legislation and Initiatives Aimed at Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Persons*. The resolution (please see attached) explicitly articulates APA's support for the enactment of immigration laws that allow same-sex couples in which one is a citizen and one is not, to have access to the same rights, privileges, and responsibilities that apply to other-sex couples in which one is a U.S. citizen and the partner is not.

We deeply appreciate your commitment to eliminating discrimination in immigration laws and look forward to working with you to ensure passage of this vital legislation. If you have any questions, please contact Day Al-Mohamed, J.D., in APA's Public Interest Government Relations Office at (202) 336-6061.

Sincerely,

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