



Marriage Equality for Same-Sex Couples

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS people benefit by sharing their lives with and receiving support from their family, friends, and other people who are important to them (Cohen & Wills, 1985); and

WHEREAS a person's sexual orientation defines the universe of persons with whom he or she is likely to find the satisfying and fulfilling romantic and intimate relationships that, for many individuals, comprise an essential component of personal identity (D'Augelli, 2000; Gonsiorek & Weinrich, 1991; Herek, 2001, 2006; Peplau & Garnets, 2000); and

WHEREAS homosexuality is a normal expression of human sexual orientation that poses no inherent obstacle to leading a happy, healthy, and productive life, including the capacity to form healthy and mutually satisfying intimate relationships with another person of the same sex and to raise healthy and well-adjusted children, as documented by several professional organizations (American Psychiatric Association, 1974; Conger, 1975, National Association of Social Workers, 2003; Paige, 2005); and

WHEREAS many gay men and lesbians, like their heterosexual counterparts, desire to form stable, long-lasting, and committed intimate relationships and are successful in doing so (Gates, 2006; Herek, Norton, Allen, & Sims, 2010; Kaiser Family Foundation, 2001; Peplau & Fingerhut, 2007; Simmons & O'Connell, 2003); and

WHEREAS the consideration of policies to provide or deny same-sex couples full access to civil marriage and other legal forms of family formation in all branches of both the federal and state governments in the United States has frequently subjected the human rights of lesbian, gay, and bisexual people to public debate and resulted in wide varia-

tion among jurisdictions in access to these rights (Gates, Badgett, & Ho, 2008; Hatzenbuehler, McLaughlin, Keyes, & Hasin, 2010; Herek, 2006; National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, 2010; Rostosky, Riggle, & Horne 2009; Russell, 2000); and

WHEREAS emerging evidence suggests that statewide campaigns to deny same-sex couples legal access to civil marriage are a significant source of stress to the lesbian, gay, and bisexual residents of those states and may have negative effects on their psychological well-being (Hatzenbuehler et al., 2010; Rostosky et al., 2009); and

WHEREAS the denial of civil marriage, including the creation of legal statuses such as civil unions and domestic partnerships, stigmatizes same-sex relationships, perpetuates the stigma historically attached to homosexuality, and reinforces prejudice against lesbian, gay, and bisexual people (Badgett, 2009; Herek, 2006; Hull, 2006); and

WHEREAS many gay, lesbian, and bisexual adults who are in a committed same-sex relationship have taken advantage of the right to marriage, either in their home jurisdictions or in other jurisdictions, even though many jurisdictions that do not permit marriage of same-sex couples do not recognize these valid marriages (Badgett, 2009; Gates et al., 2008; Herel, Marech, & Lelchuk, 2004; Marech, 2004); and

WHEREAS many other adults who are in a committed same-sex relationship wish to marry, but are prevented by state law from being married in their home jurisdiction or from receiving recognition of their marriages performed elsewhere (Herek et al., 2010); and

WHEREAS empirical research demonstrates that the psychological and social aspects of committed relationships between same-sex partners closely resemble those of het-



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erosexual partnerships, and an emerging research literature suggests that legally recognized same-sex relationships may also be similar to heterosexual marriages in these psychological and social aspects (Balsam, Beauchaine, Rothblum, & Solomon, 2008; Kurdek, 2004, 2005; Peplau & Fingerhut, 2007); and

WHEREAS married individuals generally receive social, economic, health, and psychological benefits from their marital status, including numerous rights and benefits provided by private employers and by state and federal governments (Badgett, 2001; Brown, 2000; Chauncey 2005; Gove, Hughes, & Style, 1983; Gove, Style, & Hughes, 1990; Kiecolt-Glaser & Newton, 2001; Murray, 2000; Ross, Mirowsky, Goldstein, 1990; Stack & Eshleman, 1998; Williams, 2003); and

WHEREAS all people can be adversely affected by high levels of stress, and the link between experiencing stress and manifesting symptoms of psychological or physical illness is well established in human beings and other species (Cohen, Doyle, & Skoner, 1999; Dohrenwend, 2000); Kiecolt-Glaser, McGuire, Robles, & Glaser, 2002); and

WHEREAS individuals with a homosexual or bisexual orientation are often subjected to minority stress, that is, additional stress beyond what is normally experienced by the heterosexual population, as a consequence of stigma, discrimination, and violence (Badgett, 2001; Berrill, 1992; Herek, 2009; Herek, Gillis, Cogan, 1999; Mays & Cochran, 2001; Meyer, 1995; 2003; Meyer, Schwartz, & Frost, 2008); and

WHEREAS the experience of minority stress may create somewhat higher levels of illness or psychological distress in the sexual minority population, compared to the heterosexual population (Herek & Garnets, 2007; Mays & Cochran, 2001; Meyer, 1995; 2003); and

WHEREAS minority stress is common to all minority groups that experience stressors due to prejudice and discrimination based on their minority status (Meyer, 2003); and

WHEREAS lesbian, gay, and bisexuals with multiple minority statuses (e.g., people of color, persons with disabilities) often experience a dual minority stress that may negatively impact their mental health (Crawford, Allison, Zamboni, & Soto, 2002; Green, 1994; Harley, Nowak, Gassaway, & Savag, 2002); and

WHEREAS policies supportive of lesbian, gay, and bisexual people's human rights may have positive effects on their psychological well-being (Blake, Ledsky, Lehman, Goodenow, Sawyer, & Hack, 2001; Goodenow, Szalacha, & Westheimer, 2006; Hatzenbuehler, Keyes, Hasin, 2009);

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the American Psychological Association (APA) supports full marriage equality for same-sex couples;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the APA reiterates its opposition to ballot measures, statutes, constitutional amendments, and other forms of discriminatory policy aimed at limiting lesbian, gay, and bisexual people's access to legal protections for their human rights, including such measures as those that deny same-sex couples the right to marry (Anton, 2008; Conger, 1975);

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the APA calls on state governments to repeal all measures that deny same-sex couples the right to civil marriage and to enact laws to provide full marriage equality to same-sex couples;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the APA calls on the federal government to extend full recognition to legally married same-sex couples, and to accord them all of the rights, benefits, and responsibilities that it provides to legally married different-sex couples;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the APA encourages psychologists and other behavioral scientists to conduct quality research that extends our understanding of the lesbian, gay, and bisexual population, including the role of close relationships and family formation on the health and well-being of lesbian, gay, and bisexual adults and youths;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the APA encourages psychologists and other professionals with appropriate knowledge to take the lead in developing interventions and in educating the public to reduce prejudice and discrimination and to help ameliorate the negative effects of stigma;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the APA will work with government and private funding agencies to promote such research and interventions to improve the health and well-being of lesbian, gay, and bisexual people.

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