

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 10, 2014

The President  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

We write to urge you to appoint, without delay, a Special Envoy for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) human rights within the U.S. Department of State, in line with the position proposed in the International Human Rights Defense Act of 2014 (S. 2472, H.R. 5128). While we hope that Congress will swiftly pass the International Human Rights Defense Act, we believe that the grave threats posed to LGBT peoples around the world necessitate that this Special Envoy position be established as soon as possible.

In nearly eighty nations around the world there exist laws that criminalize homosexuality, prohibit public support for the LGBT community, or promote homophobia. In seven countries, homosexuality is punishable by death. Even more troubling, though, is the recent trend of countries passing barbaric laws that deliberately try to persecute the LGBT community. This past year alone Uganda and Nigeria passed new laws criminalizing homosexuality with potential punishment of life imprisonment. A number of people have already been arrested and tried under these new laws. This recent wave of discrimination has not gone unnoticed by your Administration. The State Department's annual Human Rights Report, released this past February, shows a clear pattern of increased human rights violations based on sexual orientation and gender identity in every region of the world.

Your administration has taken admirable steps to combat this recent tide of discrimination. Both Secretary Clinton and Kerry have stated that LGBT rights are human rights and have taken concrete steps to address violations of these rights abroad. We applaud their efforts to protect LGBT individuals no matter where they live on the globe. We are also grateful for your leadership and your continued efforts to fight on behalf of equality at home and abroad.

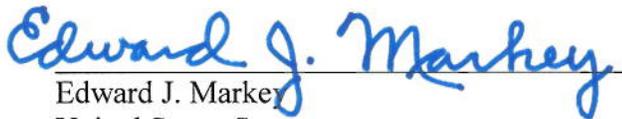
Yet, we believe the time has come to take the next step. To adequately address the challenges posed by these new discriminatory laws, there needs to be coordination of action across the federal government. That is why we are calling on you to create a Special Envoy within the State Department who would serve as principle advisor to the Secretary of State on LGBT issues and can coordinate our efforts to resist these discriminatory laws.

Time is of the essence. It is crucial that this position be established as soon as possible to ensure that it is carried over into the next administration. By appointing this senior official before

the end of this calendar year, your administration can ensure that the position is embedded into the culture of the State Department before the end of your term in office, thereby making it more likely that our recent efforts to fight for equality are not worn away by a future administration.

Throughout your presidency you have confirmed that the United States of America continues to stand for justice and equality. We look forward to continuing to work with you on this issue.

Sincerely,



Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator



Benjamin L. Cardin  
United States Senator



Jeanne Shaheen  
United States Senator



Barbara Mikulski  
United States Senator



Tammy Baldwin  
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator



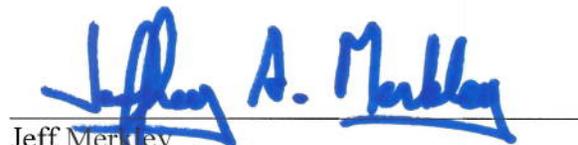
Bernie Sanders  
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse  
United States Senator



Jeff Merkley  
United States Senator



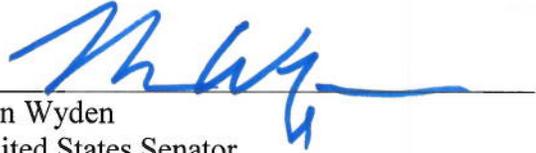
Barbara Boxer  
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator



Maria Cantwell  
United States Senator



Ron Wyden  
United States Senator



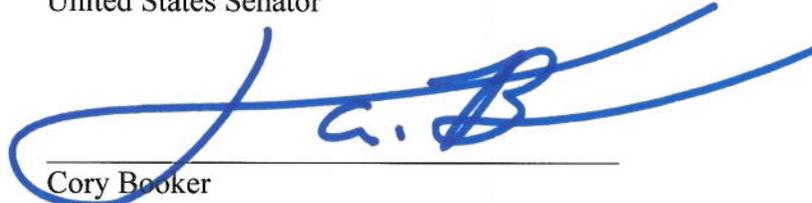
Kirsten Gillibrand  
United States Senator



Patty Murray  
United States Senator



Al Franken  
United States Senator



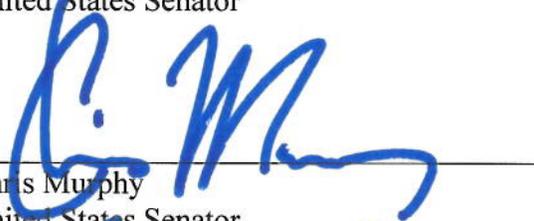
Cory Booker  
United States Senator



Charles E. Schumer  
United States Senator



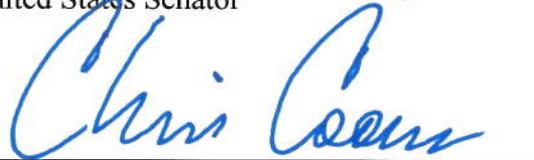
Mazie Hirono  
United States Senator



Chris Murphy  
United States Senator



Sherrod Brown  
United States Senator



Chris Coons  
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar  
United States Senator



Brian Schatz  
United States Senator