



September 26, 2011

President Barack Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

Recently Archbishop Timothy Dolan of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops wrote to you to oppose your administration's progress toward equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. The bishops do not speak for us, nor for the majority of other faithful Catholics who support loving, same-gender families. In fact, a report released last month by the Public Religion Research Institute shows that 52% of Catholics support marriage equality, and that more Catholics believe that the church's position on homosexuality is too conservative than believe it is right.

We support marriage equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people not in spite of being Catholic, but because we are Catholic. As Catholics, we believe that we are all beloved children of God, and we want the laws of our land to mandate fairness, justice, and equality for all. Your administration's refusal to defend the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) is an important step toward the justice we seek, and we applaud your decision.

The demise of DOMA would, in fact, strengthen the institutions of marriage and family about which Catholic bishops say they are concerned. Unlike the bishops, Catholic lay people look at same-gender couples not in terms of sexual activity, but in terms of the quality of their relationships. We see that committed and legally protected same-gender relationships benefit not only the individuals involved and their families, but also our entire society. A step toward justice for LGBT people is also a step toward the strong family units valued by our Catholic social teaching and by so many faiths.

We continue to be perplexed by the bishops' protest that their religious freedom is being infringed by the inexorable move toward equality for LGBT people. The Defense of Marriage Act is only 15 years old, and none of us recalls Catholic bishops complaining that their religious liberties were infringed before it was passed. We fail to see how those liberties can be infringed if it is overturned or repealed. Wrapping their political agenda in the cloak of constitutional rights diminishes the bishops' stature as leaders.

Archbishop Dolan's letter does not speak for us on many issues, but we were perhaps most dismayed by his thoughtlessness in lecturing you about the need for children to be raised by a father and a mother. You have written and spoken eloquently about being brought up by your mother and grandparents, and

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we know you understand from personal experience that children thrive and succeed in all kinds of families—including those headed by LGBT parents. We are grateful to your administration for abandoning the discrimination and prejudice of DOMA, and we look forward to your leadership in more progress on behalf of justice and equality for all Americans.

Faithfully,  
The partners of Equally Blessed

*Francis DeBernardo*

*Jeannine Gramick, SL*

Francis DeBernardo  
Sr. Jeannine Gramick, SL  
**New Ways Ministry**

*Mary Ellen Lopata*

*Casey Lopata*

Casey and Mary Ellen Lopata  
**Fortunate Families**

*Jim FitzGerald*

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**Call To Action**

*Marianne Duddy-Burke*

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**DignityUSA**