



HUMAN
RIGHTS
CAMPAIGN®

August 26, 2014

The Honorable John Kerry
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Kerry,

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to the human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) individuals around the world. Under your leadership, the State Department has continued to prioritize this crucial human rights issue, injecting the protection of LGBT people into our nation's foreign policy, from diplomacy to foreign aid allocation.

Despite your great efforts, and the progress we have made here at home, 78 countries around the world still criminalize same-sex relationships. Additionally, as many as 10 punish same-sex conduct with the death penalty and three have instituted "anti-propaganda" laws that restrict the freedom of speech, expression and association of LGBT advocates and allies. As Ambassador Samantha Power said recently, "the situation abroad is actually taking a sharp turn for the worse for LGBT individuals." It is "becoming more intolerant and more dangerous."

You and the Department have made great strides, however, we believe it is essential that the State Department have a senior official to spearhead the Federal government's efforts to protect and advance human rights for LGBT people internationally. Although the regional bureaus have taken strong steps forward, an individual "point person" would provide a public face for the efforts, help to ensure proper coordination of international LGBT issues across the Federal government and demonstrate the U.S.'s continued leadership on these issues.

The State Department has already created senior level positions on issue areas that require special focus and coordination, including climate issues, international energy affairs and combating anti-Semitism. The upcoming UN General Assembly meetings provide an opportunity to announce the new position dedicated to the human rights of LGBT people.

As the Human Rights Campaign works to improve the lives of LGBT individuals in the U.S. and around the world, we know that "victory" is rarely clear cut. For example, while Uganda's constitutional court recently overturned their Anti-Homosexuality Act on

procedural grounds, the law's proponents still say that they are undeterred and will introduce a new bill soon. Putting an end to such discriminatory laws takes effort and constant focus and it is therefore imperative to have a State Department official working side-by-side with us on this and other critical issues.

Thank you again for your attention to this important issue. I look forward to continuing to work together.

Sincerely yours,


Chad Griffin
President, Human Rights Campaign