



January 26, 2009

From:

J. Michelle Schohn, President, Gays and Lesbians in Foreign Affairs Agencies (GLIFAA)

To:

The Honorable Hillary Rodham Clinton, Secretary of State

Cc:

The Honorable Barack H. Obama, President of the United States

The Office of the Administrator, U.S. Agency for International Development

The Office of the Secretary, Department of Commerce

The Office of the Secretary, Department of Agriculture

The Office of the Director, U.S. Peace Corps

The Office of the Chief Executive Officer, Millennium Challenge Corporation

Madam Secretary:

It was a pleasure to be among the many State Department employees welcoming you to your first day as our new Secretary. I share the enthusiasm of the crowd, and as president of Gays and Lesbians in Foreign Affairs Agencies (GLIFAA) and on behalf of the GLIFAA board, I wanted to thank you for your remarks during your January 13 confirmation hearing and subsequent response on Senator Feingold's QFR relative to policies that affect lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) employees at the State Department, USAID, and other foreign affairs agencies. We agree that it is time to "take a hard look" at these policies. In fact, we were thrilled to have begun the discussion already of ways to address the inequities we face with Ambassadors Guest and Huddleston at State and with Valerie Dickson Horton at USAID. Our team gave them a thorough briefing package, including the remedies we ask you to take. We are ready, in response to your answer to Senator Feingold's QFR, to provide you with the briefing you requested on the issues facing LGBT employees. Already, through our involvement in the transition process and the QFRs, we feel more included than ever before. We hope this inclusion is a sign of things to come, and are optimistic that GLIFAA will enjoy a close relationship with your office in the years ahead.

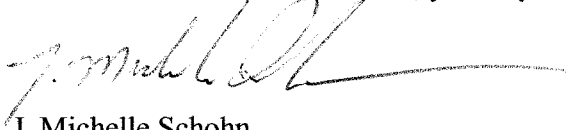
The membership of GLIFAA, the officially recognized Department association of LGBT employees, currently numbers more than 700 members and associates, including both LGBT and straight employees of the State Department, USAID, and other foreign affairs agencies. GLIFAA members are proudly serving our nation, often in difficult and dangerous places, and are delighted to have as our leader someone who has been a long-time friend of the LGBT community. Over the years, we have read your speeches and followed your support of LGBT people with great admiration and have been delighted to hear you speak tirelessly about the

people with great admiration and have been delighted to hear you speak tirelessly about the importance of treating LGBT Americans with compassion and fairness. Your consistent support of fairness gives us great hope.

It is therefore with great honor, Madam Secretary, that we welcome you to the Department, and that we present to you the attached letter, signed by 2,193 current and former personnel of USG foreign affairs agencies, including 121 Ambassadors and members of the Senior Foreign Service and the Senior Executive Service, stating their united belief that “that no colleague of ours is a second-class colleague, and no colleague's family is a second-class family.” This was a unified gay-straight effort; only 8% of signers responded “I am in a same-sex marriage or relationship and my partner has MOH (Member of Household) status” or “I am in an unmarried opposite-sex relationship and my partner has MOH status.” **Ninety-two percent of signers have no MOH and signed only because they felt it was the right and fair thing to do.** We look forward to meeting with you soon to discuss the details of these papers, including our keystone recommendation, incorporating same-sex partners in the definition of Eligible Family Member, and to chart a way forward.

Madam Secretary, I personally have been a part of the State family through seven years and, with your appointment, three Secretaries, first as the same-sex MOH of a Foreign Service Officer, and then as a FSO myself. There is nothing I look forward to more than the day when I can look back with pride and say that in partnership with you, LGBT staff finally put the distractions of discrimination behind us so that we could focus exclusively on serving your foreign policy, development, and humanitarian assistance agenda.

On behalf of the GLIFAA board, your loyal officer,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Michelle Schohn", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

J. Michelle Schohn
President, GLIFAA

The Honorable Hillary Rodham Clinton, Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

cc: The Honorable Barack H. Obama, President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

cc: The Honorable Kent Hill, Acting Administrator
U.S. Agency for International Development
Ronald Reagan Building
Washington, DC 20523

cc: The Honorable Otto Wolff, Acting Secretary
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20230

cc: The Honorable Tom Vilsack, Acting Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20250

cc: The Honorable Josephine K. Olsen, Acting Director
U.S. Peace Corps
1111 20th Street NW
Washington, DC 20526

cc: The Honorable Rodney Bent, Acting Chief Executive Officer
Millennium Challenge Corporation
875 15th Street NW
Washington, DC 20005

Madam Secretary:

We congratulate you on your Senate confirmation, and we look forward to working with you in promoting America's interests and strengthening our national security in this rapidly changing world. Whether assigned stateside or overseas, Civil Service or Foreign Service, active or retired, we are all proud to be serving our nation.

We, the undersigned and representing the diversity of the foreign affairs agencies, would like to bring to your attention a matter that concerns us all. All of us are troubled that our families are not all treated equally and with the same respect. We are concerned that access to the federal health care insurance program is denied to same-sex partners of employees serving in Third World countries with substandard medical care. We question the logic of leaving same-sex partners to fend for themselves during an emergency evacuation of a high danger post. We are embarrassed when the Department will reimburse a variety of moving expenses, including the cost of transporting a pet, when an employee is assigned overseas, but will not do the same for a same-sex partner. We are saddened that individual and

community safety are put at risk because full language instruction is not available to same-sex partners. We are uncomfortable that same-sex partners receive less compensation and fewer benefits for performing exactly the same job inside the mission as an opposite-sex spouse, that is, when same-sex partners are given a chance to work.

An order from your office designating same-sex partners as Eligible Family Members (EFMs) could remedy many of the inequalities that these families face. Other remedies will require coordination between the Executive and Legislative branches.

Madam Secretary, we believe that no colleague of ours is a second-class colleague, and no colleague's family is a second-class family. Given your commitment to protecting the safety and promoting the welfare of all Foreign Service families, we ask for your full consideration of our concerns and we hope that a dialogue aimed at ending this unequal treatment can be started.

Your loyal staff,