

June 15, 2004

Dear Legislator:

We are people of faith, clergy and lay people from across New York State representing a wide range of faith traditions. We are writing to you in support of principles of fairness, equality and justice for all of New York's families and against the mean-spirited, discriminatory "Defense of Marriage Act" (S.2220 / A.2998).

Despite what you may have heard in Albany, New York's faith community is not uniformly opposed to fair and equal treatment of same-sex couples. Some of us regularly bless these unions, treating them as just another sacred rite of our faith. Some of us are steadfastly in support of government giving these couples all the same rights and responsibilities as other families, regardless of how they might be viewed by our religions or other faiths.

Though we may have different religious perspectives, there is one point on which we unanimously agree: New York State should not pass a law attacking lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) families and attempting to codify their second-class status. The so-called "Defense of Marriage Act" does not strengthen any marriage in New York; to the contrary, it attacks and weakens a whole set of families, including the children being raised in them. Rather than demonizing LGBT families, anyone who truly cares about family values should be committed to giving all New York families the tools they need to support and care for each other.

We are not comfortable letting one set of religious extremists speak for New York's faith community. Please do not believe that you are reflecting the will of religious people or organizations if you support the "Defense of Marriage Act." As people of faith, we feel compelled to speak out against any attempt to harm New York's LGBT families for crass political purposes.

We are united in the fight for equality. We encourage you to join us in this struggle by opposing the "Defense of Marriage Act" and speaking to your legislative leadership about keeping it off the legislative calendar.

Sincerely,

Rabbi Ayelet Cohen
Congregation Beth Simchat Torah (Jewish)
New York City

Pat Crawford
Activist (United Church of Christ)
Brooklyn

The Rev. Ellen Ensig-Brodsky
Interfaith Minister
New York City

Vocational Minister Larry Fuller
Ray of Hope Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ (Christian)
Syracuse

The Rev. Takayuki Ishi
Metropolitan-Duane (United Methodist Church)
New York City

Wendee Jacobson
Dignity-Integrity/Rochester (Catholic)
Rochester

Rabbi Sharon Kleinbaum
Congregation Beth Simchat Torah (Jewish)
New York City

Rev. Joel Miller
Universal Unitarian Church of Buffalo

The Rev. Koshen Paley- Ellison
Village Zendo (Buddhist)
New York City

The Rev. John Magisano
Unity Fellowship of Christ Church (Christian)
Brooklyn

The Rev. Freeman Palmer
Middle Collegiate Church
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The Rev. David Parsons
St. John-St. Matthew-Emanuel Lutheran Church
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The Rev. M. Zell Schwartzman
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