

Barack Obama

August 1, 2008

Jennifer Chrisler, Executive Director
Family Equality Council
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Boston, MA 02133

Dear Jennifer,

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to your letter of July 21st. While we live in a nation that is enriched by a vast array of diverse traditions, cultures and histories, it is our commonality that most defines us. The desire to build a life with a loved one, to provide for a family and to have children who will grow and thrive -- these are desires that all people share, regardless of race, sex, religion, sexual orientation or gender identity. My own experience has taught me this lesson well. I was raised mostly by a single mother, with help from my devoted grandparents, and then I married the woman of my dreams and now we have two beautiful daughters of our own. The love that has blessed each of those households has been strong and sure, and I know that millions of families across this nation share the same blessings.

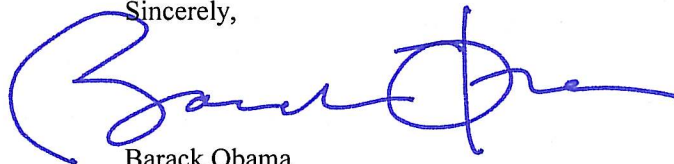
The American Dream must never come at the expense of the American family. For decades we've had politicians in Washington who talk about family values, but we haven't had policies that value families. Instead, it's harder for working parents to make a living while raising their kids. It's even harder to get a break.

That's why I'll double spending on quality after-school programs - so that you can know your kids are safe and secure. And that's why I'll expand the Family Medical Leave Act to include more businesses and millions more workers; to let parents participate in school activities with their kids; and to cover elderly care. And we'll finally put federal support behind state efforts to provide paid family and medical leave. We'll require employers to provide seven paid sick days each year. We'll enforce laws that prohibit caregiver discrimination. And we'll encourage flexible work schedules to better balance work and parenting for mothers and fathers. That's the change that working families need.

We also have to do more to support and strengthen LGBT families. Because equality in relationship, family, and adoption rights is not some abstract principle; it's about whether millions of LGBT Americans can finally live lives marked by dignity and freedom. That's why we have to repeal laws like the Defense of Marriage Act. That's why we have to eliminate discrimination against LGBT families. And that's why we have to extend equal treatment in our family and adoption laws.

That's why I'll be a president that stands up for American families -- all of them. Thank you again for the opportunity to share these thoughts.

Sincerely,



Barack Obama



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