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***** PRESS RELEASE *****

U.S. MAYORS UNITE AGAINST DISCRIMINATION

In Wake of Discriminatory Laws Against LGBT Community in North Carolina & Mississippi, Coalition of U.S. Mayors with Community & Business Leaders Are Forming Coalition Group to Protect Rights of LGBT Communities

San Francisco, CA—Mayor Edwin M. Lee joined by Seattle Mayor Ed Murray, New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio, Philadelphia Mayor Jim Kenney, Portland Mayor Charlie Hales, Oakland Mayor Libby Schaaf, Honolulu Mayor Kirk Caldwell, Santa Fe Mayor Javier Gonzales, Washington, D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser and Tampa Mayor Bob Buckhorn today announced the formation of a coalition group called Mayors Against Discrimination in the wake of recent discriminatory laws enacted against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals. Mayors Against Discrimination are initially joined in barring official travel to states with discriminatory laws such as those enacted in North Carolina and, most recently, Mississippi, but will work together to examine prohibitions on contracting and purchasing from companies in these states, develop model resolutions that can be adopted by city councils and other legislative bodies, and other measures that Mayors and cities can take individually and collectively.

“I believe strongly that we should add more protections to prevent discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities in the United States, not diminish them and deny people their constitutional rights,” said Mayor Lee. “We as Mayors must stand up together and call out discrimination when we see it, and I believe working together we can create change to ensure the rights of all Americans.”

In San Francisco, Mayor Lee directed City Departments under his authority to bar any publicly-funded City employee travel to Mississippi and North Carolina that is not absolutely essential to public health and safety. Many other cities followed Mayor Lee's lead.

Currently, the Mayors Against Discrimination coalition include the Mayors of Seattle, New York City, Philadelphia, Portland, Oakland, Honolulu, Sante Fe, Washington, D.C., and Tampa, with a quickly growing list of Mayors who are standing against bigotry and hatred.

“Seattle is proud to stand with other cities who defend equality and inclusion for everyone,” said Seattle Mayor Ed Murray. “By joining together in this effort, we are creating a coalition of mayors across the country to combat discrimination of any kind and to protect civil rights everywhere.”

“Some are trying to turn back the clock to a deeply flawed time in our history,” said New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio. “We'll keep doing everything we can to stand with the LGBT community, speaking out against discrimination and moving forward policies and laws like we have in New York City that allow LGBT individuals to live with the dignity and respect they deserve.”

“Today, I’m proud to count myself among the coalition of mayors taking a stand against discriminatory policies targeting LGBT individuals and families,” said Philadelphia Mayor Jim Kenney. “Our city was founded on the ideals of freedom and equality, and we will continue to pursue those ideals in fighting for a fair and inclusive city and government that serves all Philadelphians.”

“Our nation is made stronger when all Americans are treated equitably. Such blatant discrimination against our lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender neighbors is unacceptable,” said Portland Mayor Charlie Hales. “Portland stands in solidarity with community members, businesses, and Mayors Against Discrimination in support of the rights of our LGBT communities, no matter where they call home.”

“We have a moral and a legal obligation to root out discrimination of every kind,” said Oakland Mayor Libby Schaaf. “Bigotry and bias have no place in government or civil society. We must stand up for justice and the civil rights of our fellow Americans. Allowing our gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender friends, family, neighbors and co-workers to be treated differently under the law undermines the very essence of our democracy and harms us all. As the Mayor of Oakland – one of the most diverse cities in America, we have been at the forefront of promoting equitable treatment under the law and fostering an atmosphere that promotes inclusion and the protection of our fundamental civil rights. We will continue to uphold this tradition.”

“It boils down to our duty, when we see injustice and bigotry beginning to take hold and spread, to come together and make our stand,” said Santa Fe Mayor Javier Gonzales. “These policies are not representative of the American people at our best, and if we come together, we can stop them.”

“Washingtonians believe that there is no place for discrimination in our society. We stand strong with the LGBT community, including our family and friends across the country who face adversity,” said Washington, D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser. “And by banding together, Mayors across the country are sending a message that love, inclusion and equality will always prevail over hate and discriminatory practices.”

Mayors Against Discrimination will also work with private sector leaders and companies, like Marc Benioff from Salesforce, Wells Fargo, Starbucks and hundreds of others to apply direct political and economic pressure to repeal or stop the alarming spread of discriminatory laws in the United States.

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