



950 Pennsylvania Ave NW, Room 3113, Washington, DC 20530 • [www.dojpride.org](http://www.dojpride.org)

---

July 25, 2017

The Honorable Jefferson B. Sessions III  
Attorney General of the United States  
U.S. Department of Justice  
Robert F. Kennedy Main Building  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20530

Dear Attorney General Sessions:

We, the officers and board members of DOJ Pride, write to further our shared goal of ensuring that all employees of the Department are respected, valued, and given an equal opportunity to thrive. We are grateful for the Department's efforts in putting together last month's successful LGBT Pride Month celebration. We particularly appreciated the words of Acting Assistant Attorney General Dana Boente, who represented your leadership team in stating that all individuals, including those who are LGBT, should be free to live their lives and pursue their dreams. His words echoed the note you sent us dated February 28, 2017, in which you resolved to "work to be worthy of [our] trust."

We share your interest in ensuring that the Department serves as a model employer for all individuals who choose to devote their time and talents to public service, including those who are LGBT. To that end, we feel compelled to express our concern over your recent address to the Alliance Defending Freedom ("ADF"). As you may know, ADF has been, and continues to be, outspoken in its advocacy against marriage equality for LGBT individuals. As its principal rationale for doing so, ADF implies that gay and lesbian couples are less capable of parenting than heterosexual couples.<sup>1</sup> Beyond marriage rights, ADF has a history of defending laws that have criminalized LGBT status: the group argued to the U.S. Supreme Court that same-sex relationships are "a distinct public health problem."<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, Alan Sears, who led all of ADF's strategic initiatives from 1993 to January 2017 as the group's CEO and General Counsel

---

<sup>1</sup> See Issues: Making Marriage Something It's Not, <https://www.adflegal.org/issues/marriage/redefining-marriage/key-issues/laws-affirming-marriage>.

<sup>2</sup> *Brief of Tex. Physicians Resource Counsel et al. as Amici Curie, Lawrence v. Texas*, 2003 WL 367566, at \*2 (Feb. 18, 2003) (No. 02-102); see *id.* at \*19-27.

and who remains today part of the organization’s senior leadership team,<sup>3</sup> has spread damaging falsehoods about LGBT individuals. For example, in a 2003 book about his work at ADF, *The Homosexual Agenda: Exposing the Principal Threat to Religious Freedom Today*, Mr. Sears sought to link homosexuality to pedophilia, including by asserting that pedophilia is “prevalent” in the LGBT community.<sup>4</sup>

Given this background, we hope that you can understand why a visit to this organization by the Attorney General of the United States could create unease among our members and others in the Department. Such a visit dignifies a group that does not recognize the dignity of some of your own employees. It sends a message that weighs on employee morale and causes some to question whether they are valued members of our workforce. These reactions and responses stem from very real experiences of discriminatory treatment that LGBT employees have faced in the Department. For example, lesbian and gay employees were categorically denied spousal benefits, such as access to health insurance, until 2013—including during a more than two-year period in which the Department itself was taking the legal position in court that the practice was unconstitutional. In addition, in 2008, the Department’s Inspector General and Office of Professional Responsibility documented unlawful discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation by a member of a prior Attorney General’s leadership team.<sup>5</sup>

The Department has taken many strides to overcome past unfair treatment and continues to work toward creating an ever-more inclusive work environment. We are eager to partner with the Department leadership to continue that progress. After all, the Department’s ability to recruit and retain the best and the brightest is at stake.

The Assistant Attorney General for Administration recently consolidated the Department’s diversity management functions within the Justice Management Division. In doing so, he stated that the Department must “continually demonstrate our resolve to support and respect... individual differences” in order to maximize the contributions of the Department’s workforce. We agree, and we seek to be constructive partners in helping your Administration fulfill that mission. We respectfully request to meet with you or a member of your leadership team to discuss forward-looking ways to ensure that the Department is and remains a diverse, inclusive workplace. Such a meeting would provide an opportunity to discuss ways to develop

---

<sup>3</sup> See Biography of Alan Sears, <https://www.adflegal.org/detailspages/biography-details/alan-sears>.

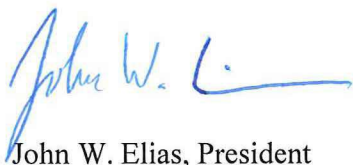
<sup>4</sup> See Alan Sears & Craig Osten, *The Homosexual Agenda: Exposing the Principal Threat to Religious Freedom Today* 71-74 (2003) (“Lately homosexual behavior on college campuses is taking a dangerous new turn—the promotion of sexual relations between adults and children, known as pedophilia. . . . [P]edophilia is not strictly limited to those who engage in homosexual behavior; however, it is prevalent.”), available at <https://archive.org/download/TheHomosexualAgenda-ExposingThePrincipalThreatToReligiousFreedomToday/The-Homosexual-Agenda-Exposing-the-Principle-Threat-Alan-Sears.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> See *An Investigation of Allegations of Politicized Hiring by Monica Goodling and Other Staff in the Office of the Attorney General* at 132-33, available at <https://oig.justice.gov/special/s0807/final.pdf>.

and implement effective policies and practices that support the Department's LGBT employees and allies, including the Department's equal employment opportunity statement, equal employment protections, and diversity training requirements.

Thank you for taking the time to consider the views of DOJ Pride. We look forward to continuing to work with your Administration to make this the best workplace it can be.

Respectfully,



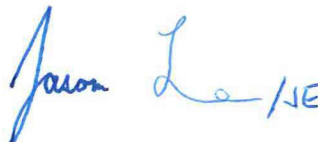
John W. Elias, President



Robert A. Koch, Vice President



Timothy S. Laffredi, Secretary



Jason Lee, Treasurer



Christopher Howland, Board Member



Debra Murphy, Board Member



Jennifer Randolph, Board Member



Barbara Schwabauer, Board Member



Patricia Sindel, Board Member