



March 14, 2007

Alice Kessler, Equality California
1127 11th St., Suite 208
Sacramento, CA, 95814

Re: AB 43 (Leno), Religious Freedom and Civil Marriage Protection Act -- SUPPORT

Dear Ms. Kessler:

The California Coalition for Civil Rights (CaCCR) supports AB43 (Leno), which would provide marriage equality to same-sex couples in California, end discrimination based on gender in the state's marriage laws, and protect religious freedom as guaranteed by the California Constitution. For over 120 years California's laws were gender neutral, changing in 1977 to define marriage as between a man and a woman. AB43 would restore marriage as "a civil contract between two persons," thus removing California from the ranks of discriminatory entities while providing vital legal protections to loving, committed same-sex couples.

CaCCR is a statewide alliance of civil rights organizations, activists, educators, lawyers, and advocates dedicated to achieving a just and healthy society (*see membership list attached.*) We recognize and appreciate the importance of California's domestic partner laws, which provide registered domestic partners many of the benefits and responsibilities available to married couples. However, the domestic partner laws are not recognized in other states and they leave couples unable to qualify for over one thousand federal benefits. These important benefits include the right to sponsor one's life partner for immigration to the United States and the right to collect social security survivor benefits. As civil rights professionals, we cannot accept domestic partners laws as a "separate but equal" system replacing marriage equality.

Finally, we support AB43 because we recognize marriage as an important social and legal institution that not only provides benefits and responsibilities to loving couples, but provides a family unit the social support and validation it needs to thrive. The California Coalition for Civil Rights strongly supports AB43, and we look forward to the legislature and governor providing equality for all Californians.

Sincerely,

María Blanco
Co-Chair

Jamiene S. Studley
Co-Chair

(enclosure)

Coalition Members Include:

AIDS Legal Referral Panel
Anti-Defamation League
Asian Law Caucus
American Civil Liberties Union
Northern California / Southern California
Bay Area Immigrant Rights Coalition
California Association of Human
Relations Organizations
Californians for Justice
California Immigrant Policy Center
California Women's Agenda
Center for Young Women's Development
Centro Legal De La Raza
Charles Houston Bar Association
Coalition for Economic Equity
Community United Against Violence
Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund
Equal Justice Society
Filipinos for Affirmative Action
Greenlining Institute
Housing Rights, Inc.
San Francisco Human Rights Commission
Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights
of the San Francisco Bay Area
Legal Services for Prisoners with Children
Impact Fund
Lake Research Partners
La Raza Centro Legal
Law Center for Families NARAL-Pro Choice California
National Campaign to Restore Civil Rights
National Center for Lesbian Rights
National Center for Youth Law
National Health Law Program
National Latina/o Law Student Association
National Lawyers Guild
San Francisco Bay Area Chapter
National Organization for Women - California
Online Policy Group
People for the American Way
Philanthropic Initiative for Racial Equity
Public Advocates, Inc.
Rainbow-PUSH
San Francisco Black Firefighters Inc.
Women's Leadership Alliance