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September 11, 2011

North Carolina General Assembly
Legislative Building
16 W Jones Street
Raleigh NC, 27601

Members of the North Carolina General Assembly:

We write this letter in response to consideration of House Bill 777 and Senate Bill 106. Senate Bill 106, filed in February 2011, contains the following language: *"Marriage between a man and a woman is the only domestic legal union that shall be valid or recognized in this State"*. Additionally House Bill 777, filed in April 2011, states the following: *"Marriage is the union of one man and one woman at one time. No other relationship shall be recognized as a valid marriage by the State."* This legislation represents a threat to North Carolina's ability to recruit the diverse workforce needed to compete in a global economy, will strip public employees of domestic partner benefits while also hindering benefits in the private sector, and perpetuates a divisive social agenda that is unwelcoming and not reflective of our state.

We are signing as individuals and pro-equality voices in North Carolina from jurisdictions that have domestic partner benefits. It is our firm belief that as a North Carolina legislator, you have an obligation to keep our state's constitution a document that protects the rights and freedoms of North Carolina's citizens, and do everything in your power to defeat this discriminatory legislation. In addition to threatening basic protections for same-gender couples broadly, the anti-gay amendment, strips domestic partner benefits already recognized by several cities and counties in the state including: Chapel Hill, Carrboro, Durham, Greensboro, Asheville, Orange County, Durham County, and Mecklenburg County. In Chapel Hill domestic partnerships allow Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) employees, and their families access to important protections such as health care and compensated sick leave to care for family members.

In 2011, 83% of the Fortune 100 and 58% of the Fortune 500 offered domestic partner benefits including North Carolina based companies such as Bank of America, Lowe's, Duke Energy, BB&T, and Reynolds American. Turning the clock back on equality will have a very real impact on North Carolina's economy and our ability to compete in the international marketplace. When companies search for locations they consider all aspects of a community; smart companies know LGBT Americans are not only part of America, but that their talent is essential to its future. I urge you to take leadership on this issue, to protect all North Carolinians and help preserve our standing as a welcoming place to live and work. House Bill 777 and Senate Bill 106 threaten important protections for contributing North Carolina citizens, and will significantly harm the future of our state. Please vote "no" on HB777/SB106.

Mark Chilton
Mayor, Town of Carrboro

Jennifer Roberts
Mecklenburg County Commission

Ellen Reckhow
Durham County Commission

Bill Bell
Mayor, City of Durham

Bernadette Pelissier
Orange County Commission

Brownie Newman
Mayor Pro Tem, City of Asheville

Mark Kleinschmidt
Mayor, Town of Chapel Hill

