

## A Resolution in Support of Full Equality for All Asheville Citizens

WHEREAS the core values of the City of Asheville include commitments to “value and respect a diverse community, workforce, and ideas,” and to “value the safety and welfare of our employees and the citizens we serve;”<sup>1</sup> and

WHEREAS up to 12% of Asheville’s population is lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT);<sup>2</sup> and

WHEREAS LGBT people possess the same capacity and desire as the rest of the population to be full and active participants in the life of our city; and

WHEREAS more than 600 same-sex couples are known to live in Asheville,<sup>3</sup> a concentration more than three times the national average and the fifth highest concentration of same-sex couples among medium-sized metropolitan areas in the United States;<sup>4</sup> and

WHEREAS statewide research shows that the individuals in same-sex couples reflect the diversity of the general population with regard to race and ethnicity;<sup>5</sup> and

WHEREAS statewide research suggests that 22% of same-sex couples are raising children;<sup>6</sup> and

WHEREAS research demonstrates that the psychosocial development and well-being of children raised by gay and lesbian couples is comparable to that of their peers raised by heterosexual parents;<sup>7</sup> and

WHEREAS LGBT citizens and their children face stigma and harms due to a lack of basic legal protections under state and federal law; and

WHEREAS prejudicial attitudes are fostered when people are treated unequally under the law; and

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<sup>1</sup> “About the City of Asheville.” City of Asheville website. <<http://www.ashevellenc.gov/government/subpage.aspx?id=3636>>. (2011).

<sup>2</sup> Research suggests that 4% of the general American population is LGBT. Available data show that the concentration of same-sex couples in Asheville is three times the national rate, suggesting that the concentration of LGBT individuals in the city may be similarly elevated, in excess of 12%.

<sup>3</sup> 2009 American Community Survey. US Census. <[www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)>.

<sup>4</sup> “Demographics.” GLBTQ Social Sciences. <<http://www.glbtq.com/social-sciences/demographics.html>>. (2004).

<sup>5</sup> Adam P. Romero et al., NC Census Snapshot. The Williams Institute. <<http://www.law.ucla.edu/williamsinstitute/publications/NorthCarolinaCensusSnapshot.pdf>>. (2008).

<sup>6</sup> Romero et al. 2.

<sup>7</sup> Fiona Tasker, Lesbian Mothers, Gay Fathers, and Their Children: A Review, 26(3) *Dev. & Behav. Pediatrics*, 224, 240 (2005); Henny M.V. Bos et al., The USA National Longitudinal Lesbian Family Study (NLLFS): Homophobia, Psychological Adjustment, and Protective Factors, 12(4), *J. of Lesbian Stud.*, 455, 456 (2008); Abbie E. Goldberg, Lesbian and Gay Parents and their Children: Research on the Family Life Cycle. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association (2009).

WHEREAS, as a result, LGBT people and their families live with the constant risks of losing a job; facing eviction; being denied the full recognition of familial relationships in public and private settings; and undergoing bullying and harassment; and

WHEREAS national research shows that “nearly 9 out of 10 LGBT students experience harassment at school, nearly two-thirds fe[el] unsafe because of their sexual orientation, and more than a third fe[el] unsafe because of their gender expression;”<sup>8</sup> and

WHEREAS ensuring that LGBT people have equal protection under the law in the areas of employment, housing, and relationship recognition can reduce the harms that LGBT people encounter under current laws and can overturn the effects of prejudice; and

WHEREAS the Asheville City Council approved last year a domestic partner benefits policy that recognizes the capacity of same-sex couples to form committed, lasting unions; and

WHEREAS the Obama administration issued a 2010 Presidential Memorandum that mandates domestic partner visitation in hospitals that accept federal health monies, and Asheville hospitals do not currently have a mechanism for recognizing same-sex domestic partners;<sup>9</sup> and

WHEREAS civil marriage confers hundreds of rights and protections under state and federal law, yet discriminatory marriage laws deprive same-sex couples of these same rights and protections, including, but not limited to, health care coverage and related decision-making, access to assisted-living facilities, decision-making around funerals and end-of-life matters, inheritance rights, survivor benefits, child custody, and adoption rights:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Asheville City Council act to affirm and protect the equal rights of all its citizens by

1. Extending the city’s employment discrimination clause to include “sexual orientation”, “gender”, and “gender identity or expression”;
2. Enacting an anti-bullying ordinance for all city institutions and grounds;
3. Creating a Domestic Partner Registry to recognize same-sex relationships for the purposes of providing documentation and offering a mechanism through which hospitals, businesses, and other entities will have the opportunity to recognize these relationships; and
4. Endorsing and supporting the rights of same-sex couples to share fully and equally in the familial rights and responsibilities of civil marriage.

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<sup>8</sup> Joseph G. Kosciw, Ph.D. et al. The 2009 National School Climate Survey. Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network. <[http://www.glsen.org/binary-data/GLSEN\\_ATTACHMENTS/file/000/001/1675-5.PDF](http://www.glsen.org/binary-data/GLSEN_ATTACHMENTS/file/000/001/1675-5.PDF)> (2009).

<sup>9</sup> President Barack Obama. Presidential Memorandum, Hospital Visitation. The White House. <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/presidential-memorandum-hospital-visitation>>. (2010).