Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 7, 2006

The Honorable Condoleezza Rice
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Rice:

We are writing to seek your explanation of the United States' actions in January in the Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) Committee of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) blocking international gay and lesbian organizations from consultative status with ECOSOC.

We are extremely disappointed that the United States has chosen to support an effort, initiated by Iran, to refuse U.N. collaboration with international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working on behalf of human rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people. As you may be aware, the United States first abstained on an extraordinary motion to deny a hearing allowing the International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA) and the Danish national gay and lesbian organization Landsforeningen for Bøsser og Lesbiske (LBL) to state their cases. It then voted to reject the groups' applications. In doing so, the United States joined some of the world's most oppressive regimes, among them China, Cuba, Sudan, and Zimbabwe, in backing the Iranian initiative. It also represents a drastic reversal of United State's past support, expressed as recently as 2002 in voting for ILGA's application for consultative status.

We are also greatly disturbed by the fact that while the State Department's 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices' continues to document relentless human rights violations based on gender identity and sexual orientation around the world, the U.S. government has chosen to deny a place and voice for the LGBT community at the United Nations. As acknowledged in the 2004 report, Iran severely punishes same-sex conduct – it enforces the death penalty on gay men – while President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe has publicly blamed homosexuals for "Africa's ills." The State Department has also denounced other state-sanctioned violence against homosexuals, such as the practice of arresting homosexual men in the United Arab Emirates and threatening them with government-ordered hormone and psychological treatment. In supporting the resolution, the U.S. government has demonstrated a reprehensible inconsistency in the protection of global human rights for LGBT individuals.

It is clear to us that the United States' human rights diplomacy must encompass the protection of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. We therefore request a detailed explanation of the administration's rationale behind the decision to drastically


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depart from its own past support of advocacy work on behalf of the LGBT communities within the United Nations. In addition, we hope you will denounce and repudiate the actions that transpired at the United Nations this week and publicly announce the U.S. government's support of the applications of three additional NGOs pending before ECOSOC: the European Region of the International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA—Europe), Coalition Gaie et LEsbienne du Quebec (CGLQ) from Canada, and Lesben- und Schwulenverband in Deutschland (LSVD) from Germany. It is imperative that the United States reaffirms its international human rights commitments regardless of gender identity and sexual orientation.

We look forward to your timely response and the opportunity to discuss with you U.S. policy on the protection of human rights for LGBT individuals around the world.

Sincerely,

Tammy Baldwin
Member of Congress

Steny H. Hoyer
Member of Congress

Eliot L. Engel
Member of Congress

Steven R. Rothman
Member of Congress

Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress

Steve Israel
Member of Congress

Carolyn B. Maloney
Member of Congress

Raul M. Grijalva
Member of Congress

Diane E. Watson
Member of Congress

Linda Sanchez
Member of Congress

Rush Holt
Member of Congress

Joe Crowley
Member of Congress

Gary Ackerman
Member of Congress

Pete Stark
Member of Congress

Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Member of Congress

Michael McNulty
Member of Congress

Jim McDermott
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Sherrod Brown
Member of Congress

Henry Waxman
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Bernie Sanders
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Michael M. Honda
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Betty McCollum
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Susan Davis
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Doris Matsui
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Neil Abercrombie
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Charles Gonzalez
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George Miller
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Jim Moran
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Nita Lowey
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Howard Berman
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