



The Association of the Bar of the City of New York

Office of the President

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PRESIDENT

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Speaker Gifford Miller
336 East 73rd Street, Suite C
New York, NY 10021

Re: **City Council Resolution 0591-2004**

Dear Speaker Miller,

The Association of the Bar of the City of New York writes this letter in full support of City Council Resolution 0591-2004, and to urge the Immigration Committee to vote favorably on the resolution as soon as possible so that the full Council can vote on it.

City Council Resolution 0591-2004, would lend the City of New York's endorsement to the pending federal bill, the Permanent Partners Immigration Act ("PPIA") of 2003 (H.R. 832; S. 1510). If passed, the PPIA would allow United States citizens and legal permanent residents to sponsor their long-term, same sex partners for immigration benefits. The principle of family unity underlies U.S. immigration policy, with approximately 65% of legal permanent residents obtaining their immigration status through family relationships. Under current U.S. immigration law, however, there is no legal recognition given to same sex partnerships, no matter how long the relationship has lasted or how committed the couple is. While heterosexual couples can marry and sponsor their spouses with relative ease, federal law prohibits recognition of same sex marriage. This inequity in the law has placed thousands of same sex couples in the untenable position of choosing between their life partner and the country they love. As our borders continue to tighten, and employment-based, student, and tourist visas are increasingly difficult to obtain, the hardship to U.S. citizens and residents and their foreign partners continues to grow.

The PPIA would amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to add the words "permanent partner" throughout the Act wherever the word "spouse" currently appears. Permanent partners would face the same rigorous requirements as married couples currently face to prove that their relationship is bona fide. Sham partnerships would carry the same penalties as sham marriages, including possible criminal charges, fines, and deportation.

The Association of the Bar of the City of New York has a long-standing commitment to full equality under the law for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals. We urge the City Council to approve Resolution 0591-2004, to voice its support for equality under the immigration law for all individuals regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

Sincerely,

Bettina B. Plevan