

Health Benefits of Legal Recognition of Same Sex Relationships

WHEREAS, the American Public Health Association passed a resolution in 1975 deploring public and private discrimination based on sexual orientation, citing infringement on the right to health care, among other civil and human rights¹; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Census for 2000 indicated that families headed by or consisting of same-sex couples reside in every county of Minnesota² and the number grew between 2000 and 2010³;

WHEREAS, Minnesota college students identifying themselves as gay, lesbian, or bisexual, report they are less likely to be insured, higher rates of mental illness, more days physically sick in the last 30 days, higher rates of alcohol problems, higher rates of sleep difficulties, higher rates of marijuana use and many other health difficulties than their heterosexual counterparts⁴ and

WHEREAS, the lack of legal recognition for same-sex relationships undermines the State's role in promoting families by excluding same-sex couples from 515 state statutes conferring rights and responsibilities to married couples⁵; and

WHEREAS, states have an interest in promoting family units as a means toward achieving social stability, private economic interdependence, and healthier home environments in which both children and adults may prosper; and

WHEREAS, the lack of legal recognition for same-sex relationships effectively devalues cultural diversity and promotes an environment of discrimination against gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered citizens; and

WHEREAS, legal recognition of a spouse can increase the ability of adult couples to provide and care for one another and fosters a nurturing and secure environment for their children⁶; and

WHEREAS, children who grow up in stable, two-parent families have a higher standard of living, receive more effective parenting, experience more cooperative co-parenting, are

¹ APHA Policy Statement "Homosexuality and Public Health", 1975 Policy Number: 7514. Retrieved June 12, 2012 from <http://www.apha.org/advocacy/policy/policysearch/default.htm?id=792>

² Smith, D.M. & Gates, G.J. (2001, August 22). Gay and lesbian families in the United States: Same-sex unmarried partner households: A preliminary analysis of 2000 United States census data. Retrieved March 21, 2006, from http://www.urban.org/uploadedPDF/1000491_gl_partner_households.pdf

³ The Williams Institute Minnesota Census Data: 2010. Retrieved July 9, 2012, from http://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Census2010Snapshot_Minnesota_v2.pdf

⁴ College Student Health Survey 2005-2010, Boynton Health Service, University of Minnesota Katherine Lust PhD, Principal Investigator

⁵ Report by Project 515, a Minnesota non-profit organization, 2007, "Unequal Under the Law: 515 Ways Minnesota Laws Discriminate Against Couples and Families" and 2010 Update "Still Unequal Under the Law", available at <http://project515.org/educate/reports/>.

⁶ Pawelski, J. G., et al. "The Effects of Marriage, Civil Union, and Domestic Partnership Laws on the Health and Well-being of Children." *Pediatrics* 118.1 (2006): 349-64.

emotionally closer to both parents, and are subjected to fewer stressful events and circumstances⁷; and

WHEREAS, the lack of recognition for same-sex relationships reduces health care access for gay and lesbian individuals and their families by limiting access to health insurance, including coverage for dependent children, hospital visitation rights, bereavement privileges, and health care decision making^{8 9}; and

WHEREAS, intolerance toward homosexual behavior results in increased rates of stress-related psychiatric disorders for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered individuals^{10 11 12}, and, when using same-sex marriage and civil union bans as a proxy for intolerance, intolerance is positively though not always significantly associated with HIV rates¹³; and

WHEREAS, bans on same sex marriage result in higher rates of mood disorders for lesbian, gay, and bisexual populations¹⁴; and

WHEREAS, institutional support for committed relationships such as domestic partnerships may be associated with lower risk behaviors for sexually transmitted disease, including HIV¹⁵, and is associated with lower rates of syphilis.¹⁶

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Minnesota Public Health Association:

- 1 Supports same-sex relationships and their legal recognition because of the positive health effects it would have on Minnesotans and their families, including improved health outcomes and decreased health care costs due to increased access to health care.

⁷ Pawelski, J. G., et al. "The Effects of Marriage, Civil Union, and Domestic Partnership Laws on the Health and Well-being of Children." *Pediatrics* 118.1 (2006): 349-64.

⁸ Grossberg, P. M. "An Evidence-Based Context to Address Health Care for Gay and Lesbian Patients." *WMJ : official publication of the State Medical Society of Wisconsin* 105.6 (2006): 16-8.

⁹ Mayer, K.H., et al. Sexual and Gender Minority Health: What We Know and What Needs to Be Done. *Am J Public Health*. 2008 June; 98(6): 989-995.

¹⁰ Meyer, I. H. (2003). Prejudice, social stress, and mental health in lesbian, gay, and bisexual populations: Conceptual issues and research evidence. *Psychological Bulletin*, 129, 674-697.

¹¹ Mills, T.C., et al. Distress and depression in men who have sex with men the Urban Men's Health Study. *Am J Psychiatry*. 2004 Feb; 161 (2): 278-85.

¹² Safren S.A. & Heimberg R.G. Depression, hopelessness, suicidality, and related factors in sexual minority and heterosexual adolescents. *J Consult Clin Psychol*. 1999 Dec;67(6): 859-66.

¹³ Franics & Mialon (2010). Tolerance and HIV. *Journal of Health Economics*. 29: 250-267.

¹⁴ Hatzenbuehler et al. (2011). The Impact of Institutional Discrimination on Psychiatric Disorders in Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Populations: a Prospective Study. *Am J Public Health*, March 2010; 100 (3): 452-461.

¹⁵ Klausner, J., Pollack, L., Wong, W., and Katz, M., (2006). Same-sex domestic partnerships and lower-risk behaviors for STDs, including HIV infection. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 51 (4), 137-144.

¹⁶ Dee, T. (2005). Forsaking all others? The effects of "gay marriage" on risky sex (NBER Working Paper 11327). Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research.

- 2 Supports policies recognizing same-sex relationships, including, but not limited to, same-sex civil marriage and the extension of employment benefits to same-sex couples.
- 3 Opposes any proposed state amendment limiting civil marriage.
- 4 Specifically opposes the ballot question, which will appear on the Minnesota 2012 ballot, that seeks to define marriage as solely between “one man and one woman” in the Minnesota Constitution.

Approved by MPHA members September 28, 2012