

# Congress of the United States

## Washington, DC 20515

October 19, 2021

The Honorable Antony J. Blinken  
Secretary of State  
Department of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington, D.C., 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken:


We write on an issue that we believe to be dear to your heart, the fundamental right to marriage equality for same-sex families. We write now because we believe the same moral leadership is important on the world stage, and unfortunately the State Department is operating under an outdated policy by which U.S. diplomats are prohibited from even discussing our country's own constitutional rationale in favor of marriage in countries where the issue is under active public debate.

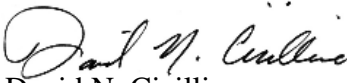
The State Department maintains a "neither for nor against" policy, whereby our diplomats are barred from addressing marriage or partnership rights for same-sex couples. While we recognize that many countries are not at the point of legal partnership recognition, and that far too many countries continue to criminalize same-sex couples rather than recognizing their right to marry, the legal landscape is quickly evolving. There are now 29 countries, including in Asia and in Central America, that affirm marriage for same-sex couples. Where marriage is a significant public issue abroad, we trust you would want your Administration to be standing on the right side of history.

President Biden's February "Memorandum on Advancing the Human Rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Intersex Persons Around the World" calls on the United States "to lead by the power of our example in the cause of advancing the human rights of LGBTQI+ persons around the world." Part of that example means that our diplomats should have the ability to explain why our Supreme Court found marriage equality to be a constitutional right. And why, in the words of Justice Kennedy, the Court based its ruling on the recognition that "[n]o union is more profound than marriage, for it embodies the highest ideals of love, fidelity, devotion, sacrifice, and family."

We do not ask the State Department to speak to marriage in every country or context. But we do ask the Department to provide the opportunity to U.S. personnel to defend our values and the dignity of our LGBTQI families at appropriate moments when the power of our example might make a meaningful difference. The Administration's February Memorandum also calls on agencies to review and rescind inconsistent policies. The State Department's outdated policy of mandated indifference should be rescinded as a matter of urgency.

Sincerely,

  
Joaquin Castro  
Member of Congress

  
David N. Cicilline  
Member of Congress

  
Dina Titus  
Member of Congress

/s  
Jake Auchincloss  
Member of Congress

/s  
Carolyn B. Maloney  
Member of Congress

/s  
James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress

/s  
Paul D. Tonko  
Member of Congress

/s  
Juan Vargas  
Member of Congress

/s  
Ted Deutch  
Member of Congress

/s  
Chrissy Houlahan  
Member of Congress

/s  
Andy Levin  
Member of Congress

/s  
Ilhan Omar  
Member of Congress

/s  
Peter Welch  
Member of Congress

/s  
Ted W. Lieu  
Member of Congress

/s  
Ann Kirkpatrick  
Member of Congress

/s  
Sara Jacobs  
Member of Congress

/s  
Earl Blumenauer  
Member of Congress

/s  
Abigail D. Spanberger  
Member of Congress

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Mark Takano  
Member of Congress

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Bonnie Watson Coleman  
Member of Congress

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Dwight Evans  
Member of Congress

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Mark Pocan  
Member of Congress

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Mondaire Jones  
Member of Congress

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Dean Phillips  
Member of Congress

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Ritchie Torres  
Member of Congress

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Sharice L. Davids  
Member of Congress

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Adriano Espaillat  
Member of Congress

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Jerrold Nadler  
Member of Congress

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Madeleine Dean  
Member of Congress

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Tom Malinowski  
Member of Congress

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William R. Keating  
Member of Congress

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Jim Costa  
Member of Congress

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Colin Allred  
Member of Congress

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Jan Schakowsky  
Member of Congress

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Chris Pappas  
Member of Congress

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Barbara Lee  
Member of Congress

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Albio Sires  
Member of Congress

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Lois Frankel  
Member of Congress

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Angie Craig  
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Danny K. Davis  
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Nikema Williams  
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Jennifer Wexton  
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Sean Patrick Maloney  
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Norma J. Torres  
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Jackie Speier  
Member of Congress

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Grace Meng  
Member of Congress

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Kathy Manning  
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Raja Krishnamoorthi  
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Anna G. Eshoo  
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Bill Foster  
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Linda T. Sánchez  
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Joe Neguse  
Member of Congress

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Suzanne Bonamici  
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Jahana Hayes  
Member of Congress

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Adam B. Schiff  
Member of Congress

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Josh Gottheimer  
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Mike Doyle  
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John Yarmuth  
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Brian Higgins  
Member of Congress