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Human Rights Campaign Releases First-Ever Index of LGBT Inclusion within a Faith-based Community

Benchmarks policies and practices among 200+ Jewish nonprofit organizations in North America

WASHINGTON — The Human Rights Campaign, the nation’s largest lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) civil rights organization, released today its first-ever index of inclusion within a faith-based community. The Jewish Organization Equality Index (JOEI) provides benchmarks for gauging, and resources for improving, LGBT inclusivity policies and practices of North American Jewish communal organizations. The entire report is available at www.hrc.org/joei.

Key findings from the index create a preliminary snapshot of how a broad range of Jewish organizations—from national umbrella and advocacy groups to local nonprofits and synagogues—address LGBT diversity and inclusion in three categories of practice: organizational inclusion efforts, community/client engagement and workplace policies.

An estimated 10% of the organizations invited to take the 89-question survey completed it, which is consistent with HRC’s experience in launching inaugural indices of this type. Of the 204 Jewish nonprofit organizations that participated, 50% received the top score of “inclusion,” meaning they are taking significant steps to welcome LGBT individuals and families. By contrast, the first year of HRC’s Corporate Equality Index, which rates Fortune1000 companies on inclusion for LGBT employees, only 13 organizations of the 319 rated—or 4%—received the highest score.

The index also highlights significant opportunities for improvement, especially in the areas of recruitment and training. Of the participating organizations, 79% of participants expressed they have not targeted the LGBT community in workplace recruitment efforts, and 59% have not completed any diversity or inclusion training in the past three years. More work is needed to understand how representative these findings are across the broader Jewish communal sector.

Initiated by the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation, together with The Morningstar Foundation, Stuart Kurlander and an anonymous donor, the report aims to push the Jewish community to prioritize inclusion of LGBT employees, members and volunteers into communal organizations. HRC was brought on to guide the process of self-evaluation by creating a numerical index and survey that would provide objective, measurable results about organizations and make those results public to provide a mechanism for others in the community to hold organizations accountable.

“We are proud to help move the dialogue on LGBT inclusion forward in the Jewish community through this first of its kind report,” said **HRC President Chad Griffin**. “As times change, so do our places of worship and faith-based organizations. The Jewish Organization Equality Index sets a precedent for what we hope to see more faith-based communities do.”

Additional findings from the index include:

- 98% of participating membership-based organizations offer same-sex couples family memberships;
- 90% of participating organizations include inclusive terms in their publicity materials;
- 75% have not specifically recruited LGBT individuals to their lay leadership board in the past three years (often cited as a significant contributor to increased awareness about inclusive policies);
- 73% of responding organizations have a written non-discrimination policy;
- 66% of participating organizations actively reach out to the LGBT community to attract members or clients; and
- 33% of participating organizations with youth programming have a written anti-bullying policy.

Organizations that participated in the survey were from 26 states across the U.S, the District of Columbia and Canada, and represented a range of denominations, though no survey submissions were received from any Orthodox institutions. Jewish Community Centers, Jewish Federations and Hillels were among those with the highest rates of participation.

“This is an important moment for our community,” said **Lynn Schusterman, Chair of the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Philanthropic Network**, speaking on behalf of all of the funders. “We applaud the organizations that participated and are taking important steps to foster LGBT inclusion, but we still have a long way to go until LGBT Jews—indeed, all Jews—are embraced as full and vital members of the Jewish family in every aspect of communal life. We have an opportunity to use these findings to truly commit ourselves to the vital but challenging work of forging a culture in which inclusivity, diversity and equality are paramount. The question is: will we?”

In 2010, Schusterman issued a call for all Jewish organizations to join her foundation in adopting non-discrimination hiring policies that specifically mention sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression. Among the goals of the index was to encourage more organizations to adopt such policies, and in recent years, some of the largest Jewish organizations have done so, including BBYO, Birthright, Foundation for Jewish Camp, Jewish Federations of North America and Moishe House, among others.

The JOEI was launched by HRC on November 18, 2011, after consulting with leaders in the Jewish community, executives of Jewish nonprofit organizations and members of the clergy on how to most effectively rate Jewish nonprofit organizations on policies related to members of the LGBT community.

The report contains a number of resources, including a checklist of 14 steps organizations can take to be more welcoming and inclusive of LGBT families, couples and individuals, and an assessment of organizations’ cultural competency in delivering services to the LGBT community.

Timed to coincide with the release of the report, the survey’s supporters have joined with Keshet—the national grassroots organization that works for the full inclusion and equality of LGBT Jews in Jewish life—to raise awareness of the importance of inclusion and spread these and other tools for action. [Visit the Tumblr site.](#)

Led and supported by LGBT Jews and straight allies, Keshet offers resources and trainings to create inclusive Jewish communities nationwide as well as community programs for LGBT Jews.

“This report marks a milestone in the Jewish community,” said Idit Klein, Executive Director of Keshet. “We hope it will galvanize our leaders to make LGBT inclusion a key priority, and we invite organizations at any stage of inclusion to reach out to us for training, resources and assistance to make our community a home for all.”

About the Human Rights Campaign

The Human Rights Campaign is America's largest civil rights organization working to achieve lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender equality. By inspiring and engaging all Americans, HRC strives to end discrimination against LGBT citizens and realize a nation that achieves fundamental fairness and equality for all.

About the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation

The Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation is committed to strengthening the Jewish people, public education in the U.S., and its hometown of Tulsa, OK. Within the Jewish community, the Foundation empowers young people to engage in meaningful Jewish experiences, build inclusive Jewish communities, connect with the State of Israel and repair the world. www.schusterman.org

The Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation is part of the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Philanthropic Network, a global network of philanthropic initiatives focused on igniting the passion and unleashing the power in young people to create change for themselves, in the Jewish community and across the broader world. CLSPN also includes the Schusterman Foundation-Israel (SFI), ROI Community (ROI) and REALITY.

About The Morningstar Foundation

The Morningstar Foundation is a family foundation which awards grants to pre-selected organizations dedicated to strengthening the Jewish community in the United States, in Israel, and throughout the world, enhancing educational opportunities for inner-city youth, protecting the environment, and safeguarding civil liberties.

About Stuart Kurlander

Stuart Kurlander is a philanthropist and LGBT activist. He is currently President of the Jewish Federation of Greater Washington and has a long history of involvement in the Jewish community. At present, he also serves on the Board of Trustees of the United Jewish Endowment Fund. He was also the first National Board Chair for Keshet and the Founder and past Chair of the Kurlander Program on Gay and Lesbian Outreach and Engagement at the District of Columbia Jewish Community Center, the first program of its type at a Jewish Community Center. He was the National Chair of the first UJC LGBT Pride Mission to Israel in 2005. Professionally, Mr. Kurlander is a Washington, D.C. Partner of the international law firm, Latham & Watkins, LLP.

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