



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: June 4, 2018

The Supreme Court Rejects Discrimination Against LGBTQ Americans

San Jose, CA: In the face of so much troubling national news, we are relieved to share that the Supreme Court has declined the opportunity to enshrine discrimination into the Constitution under the guise of religious freedom. In *Masterpiece Cake v. Colorado Civil Rights Commission*, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of the baker on extremely narrow grounds, but also affirmed the fundamental rights of LGBTQ Americans, writing “while [the baker’s] religious and philosophical objections are protected, it is a general rule that such objections do not allow business owners and other actors in the economy and in society to deny protected persons equal access to goods and services.” The First Amendment is not a license to discriminate against LGBTQ customers, and we are extremely pleased to know that the Supreme Court agrees.

Despite clear advances in LGBTQ equality, discrimination against LGBTQ people remains a serious problem in the United States. A shocking 97% of LGBTQ Americans report experiencing anti-LGBTQ harassment in their place of employment, while 41% report have being targeted by anti-LGBTQ violence at work and 21% report being fired or denied promotion because of their sexual orientation. Much of this discrimination goes unreported for fear of retaliation. 92% of LGBTQ youth report hearing discriminatory messages or comments at school or from their peers, and 68% report hearing those messages from their elected officials. 10% of LGBTQ Americans living in cities and 30% of LGBTQ Americans living in rural areas have experienced discrimination from a bakery or caterer when trying to purchase services for a wedding.

The Supreme Court’s decision to uphold the values of our Constitution against the assaults of those who believe “religious freedom” entitles them to discriminate against their fellow Americans is a welcome relief at a time when LGBTQ rights are under siege by the Trump Administration. As the President targets transgender soldiers, LGBTQ public sector employees, and LGBTQ school children, we are grateful that we can still rely on the United States judiciary to protect our fundamental rights and freedoms. This decision reinforces the Court’s long and storied history of protecting the rights of minorities, and strengthens the protection of all groups by upholding anti-discrimination laws more generally against the attacks of those who believe in bigotry and hate.

The outpouring of support for LGBTQ Americans in the wake of this case has been truly remarkable. The vast majority of Americans have voiced their opposition to discrimination

against LGBTQ people. 65% of small business owners believe that it should be illegal for business owners to discriminate against their customers on religious grounds, and most religious Americans agree. We at the Rainbow Chamber of Commerce Silicon Valley feel energized by this decision and now more than ever we believe it is essential to stand with responsible business owners who respect the dignity and rights of their customers.

In order to protect our LGBTQ community and promote responsible businesses, the Rainbow Chamber of Commerce has announced our "Take the Cake Stand" program. We will be collecting, advertising, and promoting LGBTQ-supportive businesses, so that everyone in our community will know which local businesses they can go to and receive quality service without fear of persecution or discrimination. If you know of an LGBTQ-supportive business that we should include in our list, please feel free to contact us using the contact information below. This list will be prominently advertised on our website (www.rainbowchamber.org), and we encourage all members of our community to check out these great businesses.

Just because the Supreme Court has affirmed the legality of anti-discrimination laws, does not mean our fight is over. No LGBTQ American should ever be denied service because of their sexual orientation, and we must all stand together to ensure that this never happens again. We are proud to stand with so many LGBTQ and allied business owners who oppose discrimination, and look forward to working with our allies in the days and month ahead to ensure that the rights of our LGBTQ friends and allies are respected by all businesses in Silicon Valley and around the country.

Established in 1999, the Rainbow Chamber of Commerce Silicon Valley represents over 100 LGBT and ally owned businesses, business owners, and professionals in the great San Jose-Silicon Valley area. Our mission is to create a vibrant LGBT supportive business community through development, education, and advocacy.

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