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## **IINYS SUPPORTS THE FIGHT FOR EQUALITY FOR NEW YORK STATE'S LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL AND TRANSGENDER (LGBT) FAMILIES**

Interfaith IMPACT of New York State is a statewide advocacy organization representing Protestant, Unitarian Universalist and Reform Jewish congregations, clergy and other individuals. Our shared faith traditions call upon all people to participate in the ongoing work of perfecting the world.

The state's highest court, the Court of Appeals, is scheduled to hear oral arguments on May 31, 2006 in two cases that will answer the question whether it is permissible under our state Constitution to prevent loving, committed same-gender couples from marrying.

There is a great deal at stake for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) families. LGBT families are barred from literally 1,138 federal and at least 500 state rights and responsibilities, because they are denied access to marriage. These are life and death protections that most families take for granted, like the ability to make health care decisions for each other, inherit property, be eligible for government relief--including Social Security and Workers Compensation death benefits--and jointly adopt children.

Many of these protections are accessible only through marriage and cannot be secured through any protective action a same-gender couple might take, such as drawing up wills, powers of attorney or contracts.

Incremental bills that give LGBT family rights piece by piece are helpful. The bill signed into law this year giving domestic partners control of a loved one's remains after they die, or the law from last year giving domestic partners the same hospital visitation rights as spouses, are important steps in the right direction. Also welcomed here in New York would be the creation of a comprehensive, statewide relationship-recognition mechanism similar to those that exist in eight other states, such as civil unions or domestic partnerships.

IINYS stands on the side of love, compassion and responsibility in supporting full civil rights for LGBT families. This is truly about equality for all people.

We urge the Legislature to stand for equality and justice and offer same gender families the same civil protections that other families enjoy. We believe this will strengthen communities and benefit all the people of New York.

April 24, 2006