

National Organization for Women

1100 H Street, NW, Washington DC 20005
Tel 202.628.8669 / email now@now.org / www.now.org

FOR WOMEN

Terry O'Neill
President

Bonnie Grabenhofer
Executive Vice President

Erin Matson
Action Vice President

Allendra Letsome
Membership Vice President

March 23, 2010

Edward Orzechowski
President and CEO
Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Washington
James Cardinal Hickey Center
924 G Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20001

Dear Mr. Orzechowski,

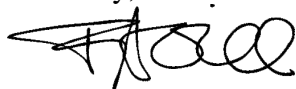
I am writing to you today as the president of the National Organization for Women (NOW) and a concerned resident of the Washington Metropolitan Area. NOW shares with Catholic Charities many common values and goals, such as social justice, racial and cultural diversity, and economic empowerment. It is in this spirit that I request a meeting with Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Washington and Catholic Charities USA so that we might discuss the fundamental rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

Your vision states that Catholic Charities works to "eliminate oppression, and build a just and compassionate society." However, recent actions bring this commitment into question. Leaders and members of NOW are greatly disturbed by your decision to change the health care benefit plan for your more than 800 employees in the D.C. area. This change is based solely on your desire to exclude same-sex spouses from your health benefits, now that such couples can legally marry in the District. As an entity that receives tens of millions of taxpayer dollars, Catholic Charities should not be engaged in discriminatory employment practices.

One of NOW's guiding principles is the recognition that all forms of oppression -- sexism, racism, classism, homophobia and more -- are interconnected, that they work together to keep power and privilege concentrated in the hands of a few. All forms of discrimination must be defeated if we are to ensure true equality and opportunity for every member of our society.

In the March 12 edition of The Washington Post, Archbishop Desmond Tutu writes: "Exclusion is never the way forward on our shared paths to freedom and justice." I hope you agree, and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Terry O'Neill
President

cc: Reverend Larry Snyder, President, Catholic Charities USA