

April 22, 2013

Boy Scouts of America
National Council
PO Box 152079
Irving, TX 75015

Dear Boy Scouts of America,

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) calls on you to end your ban, not only on openly gay scouts, but also on openly gay adult leaders. We recognize that you are one of the nation's largest and most esteemed institutions dedicated to youth development, and we believe that all American boys and young men should have access to leadership and character building activities provided by the Boy Scouts. Diversity is an American ideal and a proven organizational asset. The founding principles of the Boy Scouts support accountability, integrity, respect for different people, and civic service—ideals which are consistent with permitting scouts and leaders to participate in its programs without regard to sexual orientation.

NASW supports the right of the individual to self-disclose, or to not disclose, sexual orientation; and furthermore, supports all social agencies, universities, professional associations, and funding organizations in their efforts to broaden statements of nondiscrimination to include sexual orientation.

It has been a longstanding consensus of mental health professionals that heterosexuality, homosexuality and bisexuality are all within the range of normal human sexual expression. Social workers have identified discrimination and prejudice directed against any group as damaging to the social, emotional and economic well-being of the affected group and of society as a whole. Mental health experts across disciplines also have determined that attempts to deny or change youth's sexual orientation or gender identity increase the risk factors for suicide, depression, interpersonal violence, unsafe sex and substance abuse.

NASW has adopted a position that prohibits professional social workers from discriminating on the basis of sexual orientation and we call on you to end the ban for the betterment of all young men. We urge you to recognize the importance of Scouts for all boys and the critical need for volunteer leaders, and end discrimination towards adult leaders based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

We also support any and all of your efforts to further the principles of Boy Scouts through developing programs and leadership information that recognizes and affirms the diversity of families and communities—including gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender persons - that make up the Boy Scouts community.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth J. Clark

Elizabeth J. Clark, PhD, ACSW, MPH
Chief Executive Officer
National Association of Social Workers

The National Association of Social Workers is the largest professional association of social workers in the world, with 140,000 members in 50 states, the District of Columbia, the U.S. territories and internationally.