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OPEN LETTER TO THE LOUISIANA COMMISSION ON MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

Dear Commissioners:

Congratulations on your appointment to the Louisiana Commission on Marriage and Family. *All* Louisiana families, regardless of composition and belief, deserve support to ensure healthy lives for all of their members.

The ACLU of Louisiana writes to remind you that Louisiana families come in many forms and have a wide variety of needs. Represented among Louisiana families are an enormous variety of religious faiths, and many families observe no faith at all. While most families include children, in Louisiana many married couples neither have nor want children. Conversely, many families with children include parents who are unmarried, some because they are legally prohibited from marriage in Louisiana, and some because they simply choose not to marry. Included among Louisiana families are tens of thousands of single-parent households. Some are the result of divorce, some of the death of a spouse, and some because the parent simply prefers to remain unmarried.

Louisiana families include thousands of same-sex couples, living in every parish in the state. Many of these couples have children, who attend schools and participate in activities in their communities. Many more Louisiana families have members – including their own children – who may be gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgendered. LGBT people are found in every family of any size, although not all families recognize or acknowledge the diversity among them.

And, of course, becoming a family requires the most private and intimate decision of all: whether, and when, to have a child. Each family – each woman - makes this personal decision in its own way, for its own reasons. It is critical to respect the needs and opinions of *all* of the women of Louisiana, each of whom must decide for herself how to control the timing of her children.

As you perform your duties in support of the families of Louisiana, we urge you to recall the many ways in which families are formed and live their lives. We urge you to keep in mind that the strength of Louisiana lies in our diversity, and that none of us can make the most personal family choices for another. In the end, every family, no matter how constituted or what it looks like, is just as important and deserves just as much support as every other.

Sincerely,

Marjorie R. Esman

cc: Gov. Bobby Jindal