



HUMAN
RIGHTS
CAMPAIGN

December 22, 2016

The Honorable John F. Kerry
Secretary of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Kerry:

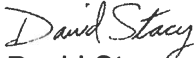
Thank you for your long and outstanding service to our country. Throughout your career, you have been a champion for LGBTQ human rights. We are so grateful for your leadership and hope to have many opportunities to work with you in the future as we continue to defend and promote the human rights of all people, no matter who they are who they are or whom they love.

I write today to echo Senator Ben Cardin's (D-MD) recent letter urging the State Department to apologize for actions taken against gay and lesbian personnel during the so-called "Lavender Scare" of the 1950s and 60s. During that dark period in our nation's history, under the influence of McCarthyists and other anti-LGBTQ politicians, gay and lesbian State Department employees were targeted as security risks and were fired for allegedly being "communist sympathizers." Those who admitted their homosexuality were often harassed and pressured to reveal others, leading to a witch hunt that lasted for years.

While the policies and practices of that era have been reversed and the State Department has recently made enormous progress to provide equal opportunities and conditions for LGBTQ employees and their families, the State Department has never issued a formal apology for the actions taken during that time. We urge the State Department to take this important step, and to also create a permanent exhibit in the National Museum of American Diplomacy to memorialize the victims and help to ensure that no other vulnerable groups will be targeted in the future.

As Sen. Cardin writes in his letter, it would be "a fitting apology to its employees and - equally as important - their families and loved ones because many of the impacted employees are likely deceased." While it may not be possible to make up for the damage that was done decades ago, these small but crucial gestures would help to set the right tone at your Department as it enters a new and uncertain time in our country.

Once again, thank you for outstanding service to our country. You have been a true leader and a steadfast ally to our community. Please accept our best wishes for a happy holiday season and New Year.

Sincerely,

David Stacy
Government Affairs Director
Human Rights Campaign