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## **Our Faith-Rooted Movement for LGBTQ Justice Is As Important As Ever**

*Religious Institute Responds to the Supreme Court's Decision in the Masterpiece Cakeshop Case*

BRIDGEPORT, CT-- Today, in the Supreme Court's decision in the Masterpiece Cakeshop case, the court did not change the longstanding principle that businesses open to the public should be open to all. While the court did reverse an earlier ruling that Masterpiece Cakeshop unlawfully discriminated by refusing to serve a same-sex couple seeking a wedding cake, the court did so because of concerns unique to this case. The court did not give businesses a Constitutional right to discriminate.

"As people of faith, we believe in the sacred dignity and worth of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer people. That dignity is harmed when LGBTQ people experience discrimination in public life. While it is reassuring that the Court did not give businesses a blanket right to discriminate against LGBTQ people, many of us still live without the protections that non-discrimination laws would provide," said Rev. Marie Alford-Harkey, president and CEO of the Religious Institute. "Every day, as the leader of a multifaith organization, I work alongside people of faith and religious leaders whose faith calls them to oppose discrimination against LGBTQ people. We are part of a growing majority of people who support justice for LGBTQ people because of our deeply-rooted values and beliefs. For years, people of faith have been advocating for non-discrimination protections in this Colorado-based case and throughout the country. Today's decision reminds us that our work remains as important as ever."

The case involved a Colorado bakery that refused to sell a cake to a same-sex couple celebrating their civil marriage. The Colorado Civil Rights Commission determined the bakery discriminated against the couple in violation of Colorado law. The Supreme Court today found that members of the Colorado Civil Rights Commission made statements evidencing anti-religious bias, and thus had not given a fair consideration to the bakery's claims.

Leading up to this case, more than 1,200 religious leaders filed an amicus brief at the Supreme Court arguing that businesses open to the public should be open to all. The brief highlighted faith-rooted support for the dignity and equal treatment of LGBTQ people and warned against the use of religious beliefs as a justification for discrimination. The weekend before oral arguments in this case, more than 100 congregations nationwide observed a National Weekend of Prayer for LGBTQ Justice, dedicating their services, sermons, and prayers to LGBTQ non-discrimination and the importance of equal treatment for all.

A growing majority of religious Americans support policies that uphold the dignity and worth of LGBTQ people. According to a May 2018 study by PRRI, a majority of people of faith (56%) oppose religiously based service refusals of LGBTQ people. The same study found that overwhelming

majority of people of faith (66%) support non-discrimination protections for LGBTQ Americans. In recent years, people of faith have been on the frontlines of the fight for the freedom to marry, helped defeat countless state-based anti-LGBTQ laws, and filed a brief to the Supreme Court in favor of transgender justice.

“While the Court’s decision does not create a new license to discriminate, it also does not address the discrimination that millions of Americans still face,” said Rev. Alford-Harkey. “The majority of LGBTQ Americans live in states that don’t have explicit non-discrimination protections in employment, housing, and public businesses. That’s why the Religious Institute is part of a growing chorus of people of faith, religious leaders, and civil rights advocates calling on Congress to pass the Equality Act, a bill that would protect LGBTQ people from discrimination in all 50 states. Our faith traditions call us to promote justice for LGBTQ people in all areas of religious and public life. Until equal opportunity is the norm and the law in all 50 states, our struggle continues.”

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*The Religious Institute is a nonprofit, multifaith organization dedicated to advocating for sexual health, education, and justice in faith communities and society. More than 8,500 clergy, seminary presidents and deans, religious scholars, and other religious leaders representing more than 50 faith traditions are part of the Religious Institute’s national religious leaders network.*