

# HIAS POLICY RESOLUTION

## Permanent Partners



**T**hroughout its 127-year history, the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) -- the American Jewish community's international migration agency -- has advocated for a generous immigration system that honors America's tradition as a welcoming nation. On June 3, 2003, the HIAS Board of Directors endorsed resolution urging Congress to adopt comprehensive immigration reform that reunites families, offers a path to citizenship to the estimated 12 million undocumented immigrants living in the shadows, creates wider legal channels for future foreign national workers with worker protections, and includes serious enforcement and border security measures that are meaningful, effective, and humane.

Family is the cornerstone of Jewish history, education, and values. According to Jewish tradition, "Kin and family resemble a heap of stones; if one stone is taken out of it, the whole collapses." (Genesis Rabbah). A fair and humane immigration system keeps families together. Immigration laws that separate loving families or force them to leave their homes, jobs, and communities in the U.S. in order to remain together do not honor the basic principle that families should remain together.

U.S. immigration law is in large measure guided by the value of family unity. Approximately 75 percent of the one million immigrant visas issued each year are issued to family members of U.S. citizens and permanent residents. "Immediate relatives"—the spouses, minor children, and parents of U.S. citizens—are unlike any other immigration category in that they are subject to no numerical restrictions.

A U.S. citizen or permanent resident who falls in love with someone from another country can marry and sponsor his or her opposite-sex spouse to reside permanently in the U.S. The permanent partners of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender Americans may not. Every year, thousands of LGBT Americans

in committed relationships with non-U.S. citizens are forced to either live apart from their loved ones or leave the country.

Under current law, there is no proof of commitment—whether financial, religious, or even legal marriage or civil union performed in a U.S. state or in another country that grants such rights—that allows a LGBT U.S. citizen or permanent resident to sponsor his or her same-sex partner to live with them in the U.S. Israel, along with Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom, recognize same-sex couples for the purposes of immigration.

## RESOLUTION

Given the paramount importance of family unity and of fairness, equality, and humane treatment for all, U.S. immigration law should extend to same-sex couples the same immigration rights, responsibilities and protections enjoyed by heterosexual couples.

*Approved, HIAS Board of Directors, June 15, 2009*