

The Business Case for Change

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) employees have made enormous strides in corporate America. Fortune 500 corporations have led the nation in providing equal benefits to LGBT employees and forbidding discrimination based on sexual orientation. In a globalizing world, however, one area of discrimination remains: international relocation and immigration.

- Foreign national LGBT employees in the U.S. may not bring non-American partners with them on the dependent visas that heterosexual employees use.
- American LGBT employees with foreign national partners cannot sponsor those partners for immigration benefits, and may request transfer abroad due to discriminatory American immigration law.
- LGBT employees being transferred abroad face a patchwork of rules and regulations when bringing their same-sex partners and their children with them.

Meanwhile, corporate frustration with American immigration restrictions is at an all-time high. The quota for H-1B skilled worker visas is often filled within days. A cap on employment-based green cards prevents talented employees from remaining at their jobs. The inability to hire and retain the right people is fueling corporate relocation to Canada and Europe, a loss to U.S.-based companies.

“I was a partner at a Big Four accounting firm and I took early retirement so that I could be with my partner, who isn’t permitted to live in the U.S. I would rather be working and productive, but we can’t be together unless I travel to see him.”

“We wanted to hire an MD from Switzerland who had experience leading clinical trials, which is hard to come by — but the job was in the U.S. and there was no way to bring her partner and their daughter to the States. In the end, she took a job with our competitor in Europe.”

Immigration Equality, the national voice for LGBT immigrants and their American family members, leads the effort to change American immigration law to recognize same-sex couples. Immigration Equality drafted legislation pending in Congress, the Uniting American Families Act (H.R. 1537 / S. 821), which would allow U.S. citizens to sponsor their foreign-national partners for legal residency.

As part of this effort, Immigration Equality created the Business Coalition for the Uniting American Families Act. The Business Coalition:

- Engages American business in advocating for the Uniting American Families Act.
- Gathers data and shares resources on immigration and relocation for LGBT employees.
- Educates corporations about how to protect LGBT employees and their families abroad.

Founding members of the Business Coalition for UAFA include Pfizer, Estée Lauder, Nike, American Airlines, Cisco, and Intel.

To join the Business Coalition for UAFA, contact Chris Fleming, Senior Manager of Corporate Partnerships, at (212) 714-2904 or cfleming@imeqactionfund.org.

Business Coalition for the
Uniting American Families Act

American Airlines

Bain & Company

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Boehringer Ingelheim USA

Bristol-Myers Squibb

Carlson

Cisco Systems

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