



March 14, 2023

Mayor Katjana Ballantyne
Somerville City Council
93 Highland Ave.
Somerville, MA 02143

Dear Somerville City Council,

On behalf of the Asexual Visibility and Education Network (AVEN), the Organization for Polyamory and Ethical Non-Monogamy (OPEN), and the Polyamory Legal Advocacy Coalition (PLAC), we are writing to express our **strong support for Amending the Code of Ordinances to include nondiscrimination provisions based on family and relationship structure.**

As a collation of organizations supporting non-nuclear family structures, which include polyamorous and consensually non-monogamous relationships, we are writing to express our strong support for the proposed amendments to the Code of Ordinances sections 1-4, 2-326, 7-41, 7-44, 7-47, 15-31 and 12-102.

In recent decades, the traditional nuclear family consisting of a married heterosexual couple with children has become less common. This shift in family structures reflects a broader societal trend towards diversity and inclusion.

As we embrace the diversity of family structures, it is essential to acknowledge that these structures can include asexual individuals, asexual individuals jointly raising children, polyamorous relationships, and consensually non-monogamous relationships. These individuals and families are often overlooked and face unique challenges, such as social stigma and legal discrimination.

Asexual individuals, who do not experience sexual attraction, may form romantic or emotional relationships with others. Asexual individuals may choose to raise children in partnership with others who share their values and desires. These individuals and families deserve recognition and legal support for their contribution to building loving and nurturing homes.

Polyamory and ethical non-monogamy, a relationship structure in which individuals have multiple romantic partners with the consent of all parties involved, has also become more visible in recent years. The polyamorous community is diverse and includes individuals who are asexual, pansexual, bisexual, and more. These individuals and families should not face discrimination or stigma because of their relationship structure.

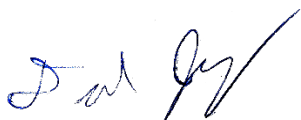
As you know, discrimination based on family and relationship structures affects a significant portion of the population living in non-nuclear structures. These individuals and families often face discrimination and prejudice, leading to negative outcomes such as loss of employment, housing discrimination, and disruptive social misunderstandings.

Policies and social attitudes towards families and relationships must evolve to reflect American households' changing reality. As we move towards a more inclusive society, we urge you to consider the diverse needs and experiences of individuals and families and take a proactive stance against discrimination based on family and relationship structures.

We commend Somerville for taking vital steps to ensure all residents are treated with dignity and respect regardless of their chosen family structure. Amending the Code of Ordinances would continue to send a clear message that Somerville is a recognized leader in supporting inclusive communities that value diversity and recognizes the worth of all residents.

Our coalition thanks you for your leadership and urge the Somerville City Council to pass these necessary amendments, which will provide critical protections for vulnerable community members and ensure that Somerville remains a welcoming and inclusive city for all.

Thank you for considering this matter.



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