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MEDIA CONTACT:
Mason Lane, Chief of Staff
Phone: (717) 773-5486
Email: mlane@pahouse.net

**PA State Rep. Brian Sims issues open letter to U.S. Senator Bob Casey on issues of
LGBT equality**
(Full text of letter below)

Good morning Senator Casey,

As you know, this week saw the two most important cases in LGBT civil rights history argued before the Supreme Court. These cases, even if not decided fully in favor of LGBT civil rights are still going to be the foundation for all equality legislation and litigation to follow, which will ultimately lead to full LGBT equality in the next decade. Today is the morning after.

I am writing to you this morning not as a friend, not as a constituent, nor as a former volunteer. While I am all of these things, I am also a State Representative in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and one whose rights as an openly gay man are being directly impacted by your silence, especially in the face of so much support from your colleagues.

Like countless Americans and millions of Pennsylvanians, I watched these last two days as my fundamental rights as an LGBT American have been at the front and center of the national debate. In fact, that's exactly where we want them to be; in the public eye, at kitchen tables, at coffee counters, and in conference rooms from Scranton to Santa Fe.

The next few months before the decisions are announced mark the most critical time in LGBT civil rights history. These cases are our *Dred Scott*, our *Loving v. Virginia*, perhaps even our *Brown v. Board of Education*. To the delight of so many, the people of this great nation are standing up with voices stentorian to proclaim their support for equality in record numbers.

Senator Casey, seven years ago I joined hundreds of thousands of LGBT Pennsylvanians in support of your candidacy in an effort to remove Senator Rick Santorum, one of the most anti-LGBT legislators in modern history, from public office. We worked tirelessly and we celebrated your victory, even as many of us struggled to reconcile our support for you with our fundamental beliefs in women's reproductive rights, beliefs which you do not share.

We have believed since you were sworn in that when the time was right, when it really mattered, you would be there for equality. The time is right and we need you to be here.

But your voice is silent. And I am angry.

Senator, I know you. I know how we have interacted and I know that you have respect for me as a gay man. More importantly, I know that LGBT people surround you in virtually every area of your life, personal and professional. You have never had a shortage of interaction with the LGBT community and that is what makes it so confusing that you have not made up your mind on equality. Or have you?

Several weeks ago your colleague, Senator Portman, very eloquently announced his support for marriage equality after coming to terms with his gay son. The Senator actually said that he'd never given the issue much thought before being confronted with it at his kitchen table. Once confronted, he came to the conclusion that LGBT people like his son deserve to have their rights recognized. To be clear, Senator Portman is a national figure in a political party that has never supported LGBT civil rights; nor had he ever done so personally. Yet with those political obstacles, and that personal history, he was still able to come to the conclusion that equality was morally and politically necessary.

Even some of the most conservative members of the Republican Party are now more supportive of equality than you, based solely on their personal experiences with just a single LGBT family member. For lesser men than you Senator, with far less experience with LGBT Americans, it took only one gay person to make them speak out against the conventions of their parties and their faiths.

I know that you are a man of deep faith and that your faith guides many of your life's decisions. I also know that faith itself evolves. Faith has been used by the opponents of virtually every civil rights battle in our history to impede progress and evade equality. Yet as each battle ended, we did not look back and say that the faith was wrong, just perhaps the faithful. Today, Catholic Americans support LGBT equality at greater levels than even the U.S. population as a whole.

Senator, the same people who voted for me, voted for you, and I am so excited to report that a vast majority of them now support LGBT equality. So too do a majority of your Democratic colleagues. In fact, as of this morning you are one of only nine Democrats in the Senate who does not support marriage equality!

You have had more opportunities, and come from more supportive communities than so many others who have voiced their support in these critical weeks. History, as well as your constituents, is demanding that you speak now on this issue and I hope that your conscience compels you to rise to the occasion.

Please, Senator, don't wait any longer to take a stand. Show and voice your support for full equality for LGBT Americans today.

Sincerely,

Rep. Brian Sims
Pennsylvania House of Representatives
182nd Legislative District

About PA State Rep. Brian Sims:

Pennsylvania State Representative Brian Sims is a policy attorney, advocate & speaker, most notably on issues pertaining to LGBT civil rights. In 2012, he was elected as the Democratic nominee for the Pennsylvania House of Representatives in the 182nd legislative district. Facing no challenger in the general election, he became the first openly LGBT state legislator elected in Pennsylvania history.

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