Dear Colleagues:

One of the 2015 signature projects of the ABA Commission on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity is the How to Be an Ally Toolkit. “Allies” are some of the most effective and powerful voices of the LGBT movement. Not only do allies help people in the coming-out process, they also help others understand the importance of equality, fairness, acceptance and mutual respect.

Most lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people remain closeted, or at least partially so, on the job because of a potentially hostile work environment. Many fear losing their job if they come out at work. Employment protection based on sexual orientation and gender identity varies by state. Many companies have adopted their own protection policies because LGBT employees and straight allies organized to make it happen. Yet many Law Firms and Companies, large and small, still struggle to make sure LGBT workers are treated equal and fairly.

Through the efforts of Takeia Johnson, Audrey Kucia, and many others, the SOGI Commission has created an interactive toolkit that can be used by law firms, law departments, companies, and corporations to train employees on how to be a better Ally to their LGBT coworkers. The training materials contain a background bibliography of the latest research; PowerPoint slides; and even a list of program speakers. In addition, to illustrate the real-world situations employees may face, the training materials contain an interactive ice-breaker and a series of scenarios to jump-start a program discussion. These scenarios depict important and difficult moments that often arise. A detailed facilitator’s guide accompanies these scenarios.

It is crystal clear that providing education and training regarding being a better Ally will be a “win-win” for employees and their employers, who have invested considerable resources in hiring and training their employees. The overall percentage of openly lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender lawyers self-reporting is on the increase. According to the National Association for Law Placement it is clear that the percentage of LGBT lawyers has generally been trending upward, and is about double that reported in 2002. With more openly LGBT lawyers, and employees generally, the need for Ally training is more important than ever.

We hope that our Ally Toolkit will serve as a valuable tool to help open the hearts and minds of everyone. By educating employees, both Straight and LGBT, concerning the importance of being an Ally and addressing the implicit biases we all have, we will hopefully stem the tide of alienating our LGBT coworkers.

Sincerely yours,

Jim Holmes

Chair, Commission on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity