

University of Wisconsin-Madison

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

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Governor Jim Doyle
State of Wisconsin

Dear Governor Doyle,

My recent experience as Chair of the Department of Sociology at UW-Madison has proven that it is in the vital interest of the State of Wisconsin to extend health benefits to domestic partners of all qualified state employees. The Sociology Department is ranked number 1 in the nation by both the National Research Council and US News & World Report, and the eminence of our faculty is the reason for this top ranking. Unfortunately we are losing two key faculty members this year to lesser departments, and a major factor in their departures is the lack of health benefits for domestic partners at this university in contrast to the availability of such benefits elsewhere. One of these colleagues is a respected senior scholar who has brought millions of dollars in federal and private research funds to the University of Wisconsin. The other is a promising junior colleague whose potential as a scholar is matched by her truly outstanding teaching. These are heavy losses to the teaching and research missions of the University and, ultimately, to the economic development of the State.

We tried to prevent these losses by offering salary raises, but there are two reasons why that response was inadequate. First, a partner who has a pre-existing health condition may have trouble obtaining any health insurance outside of a large group plan, so money is not the answer. Second, and perhaps more important, is the symbolic message that our State conveys to these valued employees: your long-term, loving relationships do not count with us. It is very hard to compete for employees in this context. As the UW-Madison faculty senate noted in a resolution last October, more than 150 colleges and universities offer health insurance benefits to domestic partners, including not only private universities such as New York University and Cornell University (where my colleagues are going), but many of our public university peers, including the Universities of Iowa, Indiana, Michigan, Michigan State, and Minnesota.

For both moral and self-interested reasons, the State of Wisconsin must act now to get in line with our peers, and provide health insurance benefits to domestic partners of all qualified state employees. I ask for your leadership in enacting this policy.

Sincerely,

Adam Gamoran
Professor and Chair