

**TESTIMONY OF CONGRESSWOMAN CAROLYN MALONEY
Before a Joint Hearing of the New York City Council
Civil Rights and Veterans Committees
on Council Resolution 1170
Condemning the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” Policy in the U.S. Military**

**New York City Hall
Friday, January 25, 2008**

I would like to thank Speaker Quinn, Chairman Seabrook, and Chairman Monserrate for giving me the opportunity to submit testimony expressing my strong support for Council Resolution 1170, which calls on the President, the U.S. Congress and the U.S. Department of Defense to rescind the current “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell, Don’t Pursue” policy and to allow lesbian, gay and bisexual persons to serve openly in the military.

From the initial introduction of this profoundly misguided policy in 1993, I have never wavered in my belief that our nation’s armed forces should not discriminate against otherwise qualified citizens on the basis of their sexual orientation. Today, at a time when our nation is engaged militarily in both Iraq and Afghanistan, the extent to which the so-called compromise “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy has damaged America’s military readiness has become even more apparent than it was fourteen years ago.

The policy against allowing lesbian, gay, and bisexual service members to serve openly has resulted in depriving our armed forces of the abilities, experience and dedication of more than 12,000 qualified active duty personnel. This institutionalized discrimination is completely illogical and counter-productive as we grapple with an increasingly dangerous world and continue to over-extend our military through engagements all across the globe.

The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) has documented the cost to our nation. In 2005, the GAO estimated the cost of discriminating against service members on the basis of their sexual orientation at nearly \$200 million over the course of just the last decade. This estimate may, in fact, be too low, as the GAO itself

acknowledged and as other studies conducted by reputable academic institutions like the Michael Palm Center at the University of California have documented.

Advocates for the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy continue stubbornly to cite elusive factors to justify its inherent institutionalized discrimination. The most common argument is the specious insistence that “unit cohesion” among the armed forces will suffer if lesbians, gay men, and bisexual persons are allowed to serve openly – an argument that even Richard Cheney, while serving as the Secretary of Defense during the presidency of George H. W. Bush, acknowledged in congressional testimony was “a bit of an old chestnut.” Then-Secretary Cheney was right – and it’s time to throw that chestnut on an open fire and consign it forever to the ashbin of history.

The fact is that many other nations – including trusted allies whose armed forces are respected around the world such as Great Britain, Israel, Australia, and Canada – have allowed their citizens to serve in their armed forces regardless of their disclosure of their sexual orientation. It is high time that the United States of America, which prides itself as a beacon of liberty and equality, joins their ranks.

I urge the members of the New York City Council, on which I proudly served for a decade, to pass Resolution 1170. Doing so will reaffirm New York City’s and New Yorkers’ rightful place on the front lines of one of the greatest civil rights struggles of our time.

Thank you.