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## **Business Leaders Urge Washington Supreme Court to Uphold Ruling Against Florist Who Denied Service to Gay Couple**

### **Businesses Say That Allowing Discrimination Based on Religious Beliefs Will Harm Washington Businesses**

WASHINGTON - Fourteen businesses and four trade associations today submitted a friend-of-the-court brief urging the Washington Supreme Court to uphold a ruling that a Richland florist violated state anti-discrimination laws by refusing to provide flowers to a gay couple for their wedding celebration. A list of some of the businesses and associations follows at the end of this announcement.

The brief was filed in the florist's appeal of *Ingersoll vs. Arlene's Flowers*, a case in which Robert Ingersoll and Curt Freed are suing the florist for denying service to the couple in 2013. A Benton County Superior Court judge ruled in 2015 that the service refusal based on the florist's religious beliefs violates the Washington Law Against Discrimination and the Washington Consumer Protection Act.

The brief was prepared by attorneys Leonard Feldman at Peterson Wampold Rosato Luna Knopp and Jamila Johnson at Schwabe Williamson & Wyatt. "We are honored to represent such a diverse range of Washington businesses and trade associations so that we can share with the Court the significant economic harms that would be caused by permitting discrimination based on religious beliefs," they said.

In their amicus brief, the businesses argue that enforcement of Washington's anti-discrimination law provides significant business benefits. They describe economic harms that would be caused by sanctioning discrimination against LGBT people, such as making it difficult for Washington businesses to recruit and retain the best employee talent to compete effectively in a national and global economy. They also point out that allowing businesses to refuse service because of religious beliefs could subject other individuals to discrimination based on gender, race, and ethnicity as well as sexual orientation.

The brief notes that courts in Colorado, New Mexico, and New York have rejected the argument being made by Arlene's Flowers. "Appellants are asking this Court to do something that no court has ever done: to hold that individuals can lawfully disobey anti-discrimination laws simply because their religion compels such conduct," the brief says.

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The following are some of the businesses and trade associations joined the brief:

Business Associations:

Greater Seattle Business Association  
Inland Northwest Business Alliance  
Seattle Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce  
Tabor 100

Businesses:

Amazon, Inc.  
Expedia, Inc.  
Group Health Cooperative  
Microsoft Corporation  
Chachalounge, LLC (dba Cha Cha Lounge)  
JOWW LLC (dba Percy's Co.)  
Modern Housing, LLC (dba Ace Hotel Seattle)  
Molly Moon's Homemade Ice Cream, LLC  
Northwest Polite Society LLC  
Pike Pine Diner, LLC (dba Comet Tavern and Lost Lake Café and Lounge)  
Shafty's, LLC (dba Grim's Provisions & Spirits)  
SugarPill, Inc.  
Wide Open, Inc. (dba 5-Point Café)

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