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Health, Employment, Labor and Pensions hearing
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Thank you Chairman Andrews and Ranking Member Kline for the opportunity to speak today in support of the Employment Non-Discrimination Act of 2007 (H.R. 2015). And thank you distinguished members of the Subcommittee on Health, Employment, Labor and Pensions. My name is Kelly Baker and I am vice president of Diversity at General Mills. We make Cheerios, Green Giant vegetables, Progresso soups, Pillsbury baked goods and Yoplait yogurt, to name a few of our household brands. We have 28,500 employees – about 18,000 work in the United States – with annual sales of \$13.4 billion.

We market our products to everyone. Today, 98 percent of all U.S. households have at least one General Mills product in their kitchen. So it just makes good business sense to value all of our customers, which we do. But it also makes good business sense to create a work environment where every employee is respected, valued, challenged and rewarded for their individual contribution and performance. Because when you do this, good things happen.

A diversity of opinions is vital for an innovative company like ours that creates hundreds of new products each year. A culture of respect and inclusiveness is also important for retaining top talent and recruiting new stars. The bottom line is that respected employees are productive employees. Our work environment was built on the foundation of our Equal Employment Opportunity policy, which prohibits discrimination based on age, race, color, religion, sex, national origin, marital status, disability, citizenship, sexual orientation, gender identity, military

service, or other characteristic protected by law. Sexual orientation has been a part of our policy since the early 1990s and we added gender identity in 2004.

We know our policy and, more importantly, our company culture exemplifies the spirit of the proposed Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA). In fact, 94 percent of our employees say General Mills provides a working environment accepting of differences in background and lifestyle. As proud as I am of that statistic, I'm even prouder when I see this diversity prominently represented by *all* kinds of family pictures proudly displayed in peoples' offices at General Mills.

Our culture of inclusion has been regularly recognized by a variety of external groups. Just last week, for example, Latina Style magazine once again named General Mills as one of the top 50 companies in America for Latinas. We also achieved a 100 percent score on the Human Rights Campaign's Corporate Equality Index, which recognizes the policies and practices we have that are supportive of our GLBT employees. We have also been honored as one of the:

- 100 Best Companies to Work For, Fortune 2006, 2005, 2004
- 100 Best Corporate citizens, Business Ethics magazine, 2006, 2005, 2004, 2003
- 100 Best Companies for Working Mothers, Working Mother magazine, 11 straight years
- Top 50 Companies for Diversity, DiversityInc, 2007, 2005, 2004

DiversityInc said that for the fourth year in a row, its Top 50 companies – expressed as a stock index – beat the S&P 500, Dow Jones Industrial Average and the Nasdaq on a 10-, five- and one-year basis. That performance underscores the link between good diversity management, excellent corporate governance and return on equity for shareholders.

In addition to promoting diversity because of its benefits to our business, we support the ENDA legislation because we believe it is a fundamental right of all

American citizens to be treated fairly, with respect and dignity in the workplace, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Our support mirrors the state in which we are headquartered, Minnesota, which is one of 20 states to adopt legislation preventing discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. We believe federal protection of our citizens will be a symbolic and effective means to deliver civil rights to all.

We know that providing an environment where people of different backgrounds and lifestyles can grow and thrive is essential to our long-term success. In our business, innovation is the key to survival. People with diverse experiences and backgrounds bring different and uniquely valuable perspectives and solutions. This diversity drives innovation. That's why we support any practice or public policy that encourages bringing diversity to the table.

Internally, we've done several things to encourage diversity. In the mid-1990s, we created our GLBT network, Betty's Family, named after one of our key icons – Betty Crocker. This network's mission is to create a safe, open and productive environment for General Mills' GLBT employees. One of our most senior executives helped found this network and has commented frequently on the powerful impact it has had on our ability to recruit and retain top talent. We know this network, in addition to our six other affinity groups, is a tangible demonstration of our commitment to attracting, developing and advancing every unique employee.

One of our newer employees, a marketing manager recruited from Northwestern's Kellogg School of Management's MBA program, said one of the reasons she chose to join General Mills, among many opportunities, was because of our dedicated GLBT network. She told me that any company can claim to have a GLBT network on their corporate Web site. But after talking with one of our employees who described how active our network is, she made her decision to join General Mills.

We also understand that establishing a culture of respect is a baseline for our employment standards. Beyond that, we strive to be an employer of choice – a place where we demonstrate support for the personal needs of our employees to allow them to be fully committed to their work. In 1999, we introduced Domestic Partner benefits, another demonstration that we are committed to providing equality to our GLBT employees in all of our employment benefits.

In closing, let me just reiterate why General Mills believes this legislation is good for business and good for America. It will:

- Help businesses attract and retain top talent.
- Help provide a safe, comfortable and productive work environment, free from any form of discrimination.
- Help create a culture that fosters creativity and innovation that is vital to the success of all businesses.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. I would be happy to take any questions.