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February 12, 2021

San Francisco Historic Preservation Commission
49 South Van Ness Avenue, Suite 1400
San Francisco, CA 94103

*Testimony of the NYC LGBT Historic Sites Project
in support of the proposed landmark designation of the Lyon-Martin House*

The New York City LGBT Historic Sites Project strongly advocates for the designation of the Lyon-Martin House as a San Francisco Landmark for its national significance as the place where Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin founded the Daughters of Bilitis in 1955. Launched in 2015 by preservation professionals, the NYC LGBT Historic Sites Project is an award-winning cultural heritage initiative and educational resource documenting LGBT place-based history in New York City. The Project has documented hundreds of sites from the 17th century to 2000 that are important to LGBT history and illustrate the community's influence on New York City and American culture. This has led to recognition of seven New York City LGBT Landmarks and the listing of seven LGBT sites to the National Register of Historic Places.

Lyon and Martin's creation of the Daughters of Bilitis (DOB), the first American lesbian organization, had a profound influence on the then-emerging LGBT rights movement, not only on the West Coast, but also nationally. Lyon and Martin were particularly influential to the East Coast-based Barbara Gittings, who met them at a DOB meeting in San Francisco in 1956, when she was just starting to get involved in LGBT organizing. Gittings, who would go on to become one of the country's most prominent LGBT rights leaders, founded the East Coast Chapter of DOB in New York City in 1958, at the request of Lyon and Martin. Gittings was the second editor of DOB's national publication *The Ladder*, after Lyon and Martin, which was a vital source of lesbian-themed communication, activism, and storytelling in an era when such topics were rare, hidden, and illegal. Some of Gittings' key achievements included working with the American Library Association to have libraries provide positive literature about homosexuality and working with other activists to influence the American Psychiatric Association to drop the classification of homosexuality as a mental illness in 1972. Gittings worked with other DOB members and East Coast groups to picket in front of Independence Hall in Philadelphia on the Fourth of July from 1965 to 1969, which were among the earliest American LGBT protests and led to the formation of the Christopher Street Liberation Day March in 1970 to commemorate Stonewall. Gittings' initial San Francisco meeting and continued relationship with Lyon and Martin, and through them her work with DOB and *The Ladder*, helped set Gittings on a path to becoming the "mother" of the East Coast LGBT rights movement, as many have considered her.

Another important New York City connection for Lyon and Martin was Lorraine Hansberry, the award-winning Black playwright of *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959), who submitted original stories to

The Ladder under a pseudonym in its earliest years. Lyon and Martin met with Hansberry at her apartment in Greenwich Village following the play's success on Broadway.

From its founding into the early 1970s, DOB was an invaluable pioneering social and political organization that laid the foundations for countless other lesbian, LGBT, trans, and women's organizations and community centers in New York City and elsewhere.

Sincerely,

Andrew S. Dolkart, Ken Lustbader, and Jay Shockley, Co-Directors
Amanda Davis, Project Manager