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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SpeakOUT Announces New Executive Director

Oldest LGBTQ speakers bureau planning for the future

Boston, Mass. – June 2, 2014 – The Board of Directors of SpeakOUT, the nation's oldest gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and queer speakers bureau, is pleased to announce Ellyn Ruthstrom has been named Executive Director for the organization. Ruthstrom has been active in Boston's LGBTQ community for 20 years and has been the president of the Bisexual Resource Center (BRC), the oldest national bi organization in the U.S., for the past 8 years.

In her role as the BRC president, she co-organized the first White House Roundtable on Bisexual Issues in 2013 and has been instrumental in establishing the Bisexual Leadership Roundtable, a network for activists and writers across the country. Ruthstrom focused her career in publications and nonprofits, including her work as Editor in Chief of *Teen Voices Magazine* and Project Manager of the Hood Children's Literacy Project at Lesley University. She's also a writer and editor and has published in *The Women's Review of Books*, *Bilerico.com*, *The Review Review*, and other print and online publications.

"I've been a speaker for SpeakOUT for several years and it's an honor to now be charged with taking the organization to the next level." Ruthstrom said. "We are planning new directions and new ways to engage with the community. We will continue to focus on our mission to create a world free of homo-bi-trans-phobia by telling the truths of people's lives, but we are also looking at other ways that our work can help serve the LGBTQ community."

For over 40 years, SpeakOUT has provided training in public speaking to build the skills of its volunteer speaker network – speakers who conduct informal, interactive speaking engagements in settings like high schools, colleges, businesses, churches, synagogues, and community service organizations. The group’s mission focuses on using personal storytelling and sharing the truths of people’s lives to open minds and change attitudes.

SpeakOUT board member Bill Barnert, who has been a speaker since 1980, said, “SpeakOUT is about to move into a new stage of growth. We are excited to have Ellyn join us as Executive Director, and look forward to building a better, stronger SpeakOUT with her. With Ellyn's leadership, we hope to reach many more people than we would as an all-volunteer agency.”

“Some people might question whether we still need an LGBTQ speakers' bureau in 2014 in Massachusetts,” Barnert commented. “Come with us to one of our high school or middle school speaking engagements, to our visits to church or synagogue youth, to colleges, grad schools, medical & educational groups, or businesses, and you will see how much work still needs to be done, even here in the first state to legalize same-sex marriage.”

Ruthstrom added, “I’ve seen the individual change that comes from the personal connection and open dialogue that SpeakOUT excels in and I’m excited to be envisioning where this dynamic organization will be headed in the future.”

Ruthstrom earned her bachelor’s in English from Heidelberg University in Tiffin, Ohio and her Master’s in Women’s Studies from The Ohio State University.

About SpeakOUT

SpeakOUT Boston is the nation’s first gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender speakers bureau. Since 1972, our mission has focused on creating a world free of homo/bi/trans-phobia and other forms of prejudice by telling the truths of people’s lives. Today, our membership includes more than 100 volunteer speakers. Sharing our lives and experiences publicly helps us support those struggling with sexuality and gender identity – and helps us dispel stereotypes to create positive cultural change.