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February 12, 2018

The Honorable Amy Volk
Chair
Committee on Labor, Commerce, Research
and Economic Development
Maine State Senate
Cross Building, Room 208
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Re: AMA support for LD 912

Dear Chair Volk:

On behalf of the American Medical Association (AMA) and our physician and medical student members, I am writing to express our support for LD 912, legislation that will protect lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) patients from the harmful practice of conversion therapy.

Conversion therapy is aimed at changing a person's sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. Underlying this "treatment" is the assumption that homosexuality and gender dysphoria *per se* are mental disorders and the *a priori* assumption that the patient should change his or her sexual orientation or gender identity. This assumption is not based on medical and scientific evidence. To the contrary, conversion therapy is a coercive practice that may cause long-term psychological harm, particularly to young patients who may be especially susceptible to coercive practices.

The AMA opposes the use of conversion therapy for sexual orientation and gender identity. We believe that the health care provider's nonjudgmental recognition of and respect for patients' sexual orientations, sexual behaviors, and gender identities are essential elements in rendering optimal patient care in health, as well as in illness. This recognition is especially important to address the specific health care needs of people who are or may be LGBTQ, as these patients often experience disparities in access to care, as well as heightened risk for depression, suicide, domestic violence, and victimization compared to their non-LGBTQ peers.

LD 912 is an important public health measure that will help protect the health and well-being of LGBTQ patients. We urge swift enactment and thank you for your consideration of our views. If you need further information, please contact Annalia Michelman, JD, Senior Legislative Attorney, Advocacy Resource Center, at annalia.michelman@ama-assn.org or (312) 464-4788.

Sincerely,

James L. Madara, MD

cc: Maine Medical Association