

March 11, 2019

The Honorable Cindy Friedman
Chair
Joint Committee on Health Care Financing
Massachusetts Senate
24 Beacon Street, Room 413-D
Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable Jennifer Benson
Chair
Joint Committee on Health Care Financing
Massachusetts House of Representatives
24 Beacon Street, Room 236
Boston, MA 02133

Re: AMA support for House Bill 140

Dear Chairs Friedman and Benson:

On behalf of the American Medical Association (AMA) and our physician and medical student members, I am writing to express our support for House Bill (H.B.)140, 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.

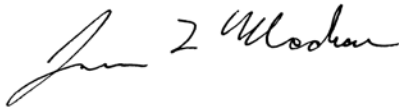
The AMA opposes the use of conversion therapy for sexual orientation and gender identity. We believe that the health care provider's nonjudgmental recognition of and respect for patients' sexual orientations, sexual behaviors and gender identities are essential elements in rendering optimal patient care 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.

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H.B. 140 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim L. Madara". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

James L. Madara, MD

cc: Massachusetts Medical Society