

March 27, 2019

The Honorable Jared Polis  
Office of the Governor  
State of Colorado  
136 State Capitol Building  
Denver, CO 80203

Re: AMA support for House Bill 1129

Dear Governor Polis:

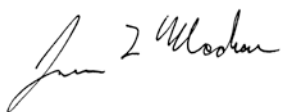
On behalf of the American Medical Association (AMA) and our physician and medical student members, I am writing to express our support for House Bill (H.B.) 1129, legislation that will protect lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) patients from the harmful practice of conversion therapy.

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 health 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 evidence. To the contrary, professional consensus rejects pathologizing homosexuality and gender nonconformity. However, the unfounded misconception of sexual orientation and gender identity "conversion" persists today and thousands of LGBTQ patients are subjected to this coercive practice. Evidence has shown that conversion therapy may increase suicidal behaviors and cause significant psychological distress, anxiety, lowered self-esteem, internalized homophobia, self-blame, intrusive imagery and sexual dysfunction.

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. 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. Prohibiting the practice of conversion therapy is an important step toward improving the health of the LGBTQ population.

The AMA urges you to sign this important public health measure and we thank you for your consideration of our views. If you need further information, please contact Annalia Michelman, JD, Senior Legislative Attorney, AMA Advocacy Resource Center, at [annalia.michelman@ama-assn.org](mailto:annalia.michelman@ama-assn.org) or (312) 464-4788.

Sincerely,



James L. Madara, MD

cc: Colorado Medical Society