

November 13, 2019

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Michael D. DeLeon
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Debra Houry, MD, MPH
Director
National Center for Injury Prevention and Control
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
1600 Clifton Road
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Dear Director Anderson, Assistant Director DeLeon, and Director Houry:

On behalf of the physician and medical student members of the American Medical Association (AMA), I am writing to highlight the endangerment of the transgender community. As the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation notes, “violence is not randomly distributed. The same social factors that shape health—including education, income and wealth, and related conditions where we live, learn, work and play—also are strongly linked to violence, and considering those links can contribute to understanding why some groups of Americans are more affected by violence than others.”¹ We have previously urged Congress, states, and other federal administrative agencies to provide transgender individuals with equal access to health care and insurance coverage, protection from harmful conversion therapies, and parity with respect to application of labor law benefits with the intent of addressing the upstream determinants of health. We continue this work by asking your agencies to identify and implement strategies to address the epidemic of violence against the transgender community, especially the amplified physical dangers faced by transgender people of color.

According to available tracking, fatal anti-transgender violence in the U.S. is on the rise.² Most victims are black transgender women, who face dangers stemming from both transphobia and racism.³

¹ Susan Egerter, PhD, Colleen Barclay, MPH, Rebecca Grossman-Kahn, Paula Braveman, MD, MPH, *How Social Factors Shape Health: Violence, Social Disadvantage and Health*, University of California, San Francisco, Center on Disparities in Health, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (May 2011), available at <https://www.preventioninstitute.org/sites/default/files/publications/How%20Social%20Factors%20Shape%20Health.pdf>.

² Mark Lee, *A National Epidemic: Fatal Anti-Transgender Violence in America in 2018*, Human Rights Campaign, available at <https://www.hrc.org/resources/a-national-epidemic-fatal-anti-transgender-violence-in-america-in-2018>.

³ Katy Steinmetz, *Why Transgender People Are Being Murdered at a Historic Rate*, TIME (Aug. 17, 2015), available at <https://time.com/3999348/transgender-murders-2015/>.

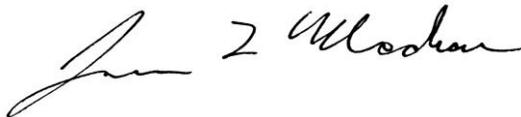
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The number of victims may be even higher due to underreporting due to mistrust of law enforcement and the voluntary nature of many crime statistic reporting programs.⁴ Additionally, research indicates that law enforcement agencies have limited ways to indicate that a victim is transgender apart from denoting that the crime was motivated by gender identity bias.⁵ Some methods are viewed as “best practice” but not standard, meaning that the collection of data on a victim’s gender identity is not consistent across sources.⁶

To help address discrimination and physical dangers faced by the transgender community and create strategies to prevent anti-transgender violence, we must have better data. Law enforcement agencies should consistently collect and report data on hate crimes to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, including demographics identifying a victim’s birth sex and gender identity. Such statistics may be further incorporated into the National Crime Victimization Survey and National Violent Death Reporting System, for example, to quickly identify positive and negative trends so resources may be appropriately disseminated. We also recommend developing incentives to encourage reporting, as well as strong law enforcement policies regarding interactions with transgender individuals to prevent bias and mistreatment and increase community trust.

The AMA strongly opposes any discrimination based on an individual’s sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or race and is deeply committed to improving the health of transgender individuals, including through addressing social risk factors like violence. We welcome the opportunity to assist you with efforts addressing the issues addressed in this letter. Should you have any questions, please contact Laura Hoffman, Assistant Director of Federal Affairs, at laura.hoffman@ama-assn.org or 202-789-7414.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James L. Madara". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "M".

James L. Madara, MD

⁴ Rebecca L. Stotzer, PhD, MSW, MS, *Data Sources Hinder Our Understanding of Transgender Murders*, Am. J. Public Health (Sept. 2017), available at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5551619/>.

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ *Id.*; see also National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Division of Violence Prevention, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *National Violent Death Reporting System Web Coding Manual Version 5.2* (Dec. 1, 2016), available at <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/nvdrs/NVDRS-WebCodingManual.pdf>, pp. 35-36.