



The Massachusetts Chapter

January 29, 2016

Re: H. 97, An Act Relative to Abusive Practices to Change Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in Minors

Dear Representative,

I write on behalf of the Massachusetts Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics (MCAAP) which represents approximately 1,800 pediatricians across the Commonwealth in support of H.97. The members of the MCAAP are physicians dedicated to improving the quality of life for children by providing quality health care and advocating for them and their families. The MCAAP is committed to the attainment of optimal physical, mental and social health for all infants, children, adolescents, and young adults.

All children and adolescents deserve the opportunity to learn and develop in a safe and supportive environment. The MCAAP supports H.97, which would prohibit conversion or reparative therapy. Such alleged “therapy” would seek to change a minor’s sexual orientation or gender identity. It has no validation in science, and poses significant risk to children and their families.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning (LGBTQ) youth can struggle with their sexuality, self-image and self-identity. Health care professionals are expected to provide support to individuals under their care, not cause further harm or suffering. The position of the American Academy of Pediatrics is that conversion or reparative therapy is never indicated, is not effective, and may be harmful to LGBTQ individuals by increasing internalized stigma, distress and depression.¹

Homophobia and heterosexism inherent in conversion therapy can contribute to health disparities as marginalization negatively affects the health, mental health and education of those who experience it. Struggles with self-image and self-esteem result in significant health disparities for sexual minority youth related to depression and suicide, substance abuse, social anxiety, altered body image, and other mental health issues.

Conversion therapy causes harm. The Massachusetts Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics urges you to protect LGBTQ minors and support H.97.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael L. McManus".

Michael McManus, M.D., MPH, FAAP
President, the Massachusetts Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics

¹ American Academy of Pediatrics, Policy Statement, Office-Based Care for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning Youth, Pediatrics 2013;132:198–203

Executive Director

Cathleen Haggerty
860 Winter Street
Waltham, MA 02454
781-895-9852
Fax 781-895-9855
chaggerty@mcaap.org

Immediate Past President

John O'Reilly, M.D., FAAP
Springfield, MA
413-794-7448
joreilly@mcaap.org

President

Michael McManus, M.D., MPH,
FAAP
Boston, MA
617-355-6000
mmmanus@mcaap.org

Vice President

DeWayne Pursley, M.D., MPH,
FAAP
Boston, MA
617-667-8000
dpursley@mcaap.org

Treasurer

Lloyd Fisher, M.D., FAAP
Worcester, MA
508-368-7887
lfisher@mcaap.org

Secretary

Kathryn Brigham, M.D., FAAP
Boston, MA
617-355-6000
kbrigham@mcaap.org

District Representatives

District 1

Peter Kenny, M.D., FAAP

District 2

Safdar Medina, M.D., FAAP

District 3

Fernando Catalina, M.D., Ph.D.,
FAAP

District 4

Elizabeth Goodman, M.D., FAAP

District 5

Dnaiel Palant, M.D., FAAP

District 6

Nicholas Kasdon, M.D., FAAP

District 7

Umberreen Nehal, M.D., MPH, FAAP

District 8

E. James Gruver, M.D., FAAP

District 9

Walter Rok, M.D., FAAP