



The Massachusetts Chapter

Executive Director

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

Immediate Past President

Michael McManus, M.D., MPH,
FAAP
mmcmanus@mcaap.org

President

DeWayne Pursley, M.D., MPH, FAAP
dpursley@mcaap.org

Vice President

Elizabeth Goodman, M.D., FAAP
egoodman@mcaap.org

Treasurer

Lloyd Fisher, M.D., FAAP
lfisher@mcaap.org

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bpring@mcaap.org

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June 6, 2017

To the Honorable Chairs and Members

Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities:

Re: H.1190 & S. 62, An Act Relative to Abusive Practices to Change Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in Minors

The Massachusetts Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics (MCAAP), which represents approximately 1,800 pediatricians across the Commonwealth, strongly supports H.1190 & S.62. 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.1190 & S.62, 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.

Sexual minority youth experience health disparities related to overt and implicit bias present throughout our society, including the educational and health care systems meant to support and protect all youth. Homophobia and heterosexism inherent in conversion therapy will add to and may exacerbate these disparities, as marginalization negatively affects the health, mental health and education of those who experience it. The best way to support a positive self-image and self-esteem and reduce depression and suicide, substance abuse, social anxiety, altered body image, and other mental health issues among LGBTQ youth is to accept and celebrate these children and adolescents for who they are.

Conversion therapy causes harm. The Massachusetts Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics urges you to protect LGBTQ minors and support H.1190 & S.62.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "DeWayne Pursley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

DeWayne Pursley, 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