



MASSACHUSETTS MEDICAL SOCIETY

Every physician matters, each patient counts.

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF H. 140 & S. 70, AN ACT RELATIVE TO ABUSIVE PRACTICES TO CHANGE SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY IN MINORS

BEFORE THE JOINT COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

March 5, 2019

The Massachusetts Medical Society wishes to be recorded in support of **H. 140 and S. 70, An Act relative to abusive practices to change sexual orientation and gender identity in minors**. The Medical Society has longstanding policy that is consistent with this bill:

“[The Medical Society] opposes the use of “reparative” or “conversion” therapy that is based upon the assumption that homosexuality per se is a mental disorder or based upon the a priori assumption that the patient should change his or her homosexual orientation.”

Per our policy, the Medical Society “believes that the physician’s nonjudgmental recognition of sexual orientation, behavior, and gender identity enhances the ability to render optimal patient care in health as well as in illness.” Efforts by licensed professionals to change the sexual orientation and/or gender identities of their patients contravene those individuals’ duty to provide “nonjudgmental recognition” of their patients’ identities. Accordingly, the Medical Society supports this bill, which we see as a necessary step to protect patients from a harmful practice.

The Medical Society commends the authors of this bill for specifying that it would apply only to efforts to change patients’ sexual orientation and/or gender identities, and would not apply to care that supports these patients from a nonjudgmental perspective. MMS strongly supports this intent to ensure that this prohibition is contained to the egregious “conversion therapies” rather than medically acceptable therapies that may explore issues related to gender identify.

The medical community is committed to improving the care of patients from the LGBTQ community—especially LGBTQ youth. This population reports a greater incidence of mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, and increased suicidal behaviors, in addition to higher instances of substance use, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), cancers, cardiovascular diseases and obesity. While this bill addresses a perhaps modest driver of these health disparities, it is an important step forward in a broader movement to improve the health of the LGBTQ population.