

Alaska Chapter

Incorporated in Alaska

American Academy of Pediatrics



DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN®

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July 13, 2020

Re: AO No. 2020-65, An Ordinance of the Anchorage Assembly Amending Anchorage Municipal Code Title 16 by Adding Chapter 16.140 Regarding Medical and Mental Health Practices, such as Sexual Orientation or Gender Identity Change Efforts with a Minor

To: Assembly Chair Felix River, Assembly Members Christopher Constant and Austin Quinn-Davidson:

The mission of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) is “to attain optimal physical, mental, and social health and well-being for all infants, children, adolescents and young adults. Furthermore, the mission of the Alaska Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics is “to ensure the health and well-being of the children of Alaska through the efforts of our members, communication and education”.

The American Academy of Pediatrics agrees with the assembly members that evidence has shown that “conversion” or “reparative” treatment models that are employed in an attempt to change a child’s sexual orientation or gender identity are “inappropriate,” “deleterious,” and “outside the mainstream of traditional medical practice.” Such approaches are also “unfair and deceptive.” (*Pediatrics*. Oct 2018: 142(4)). In 2015, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration of the US Department of Health and Human Services stated that “none of the research supports efficacy of these types of interventions” and that they are “coercive” and can be harmful to youth and their families. Multiple medical and mental health organizations, including the AAP, agree that being lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or nonbinary are “part of the normal spectrum of human diversity and do not constitute a mental disorder.” (SAMHSA Oct 2015. HHS Pub No. (SMA) 15-4928)

For transgender youth, the AAP recommends a “gender-affirmative care model” where pediatric providers should work with other medical, mental health, and social services to offer developmentally appropriate health care that is directed toward “understanding and appreciating the youth’s gender experience” by partnering with youth and their families in a nonjudgmental way. This allows youth and their families a supportive environment to “facilitate exploration of complicated emotions and gender-diverse expressions while allowing questions and concerns to be raised.” (*Pediatrics*. Oct 2018: 142(4))

Additionally, for lesbian, gay, bisexual, pansexual, and asexual youth, factors that have been found to be protective against suicidal ideation and attempts include “family connectedness, caring adults, and school safety.” Based on data from the American Psychological Association showing that it can cause harm by “increasing internalized stigma, distress, and depression,” the AAP stated that “in no situation is a referral for conversion or reparative therapy indicated.” (*Pediatrics*. July 2013: 132(1))

Because the missions of the AAP and the Alaska Chapter of the AAP are to ensure optimal health and well-being of youth, we stand with the assembly in favor of this amendment.

Thank you,
Anna Ogena, MD- President
Jody Butto, MD- Vice President
Kevin Kollins, MD- Secretary/Treasurer
Lily Lou, MD- Past President