



April 12, 2021

Dear Governor XX:

On behalf of the American Society for Dermatologic Surgery Association (ASDSA) and its 6,400 physician members, I am writing to express our concern at the proliferation of anti-transgender legislation being introduced in state legislatures across the country and urge you to veto any bills that may come across your desk. Many ASDSA members treat patients needing gender affirming care and vigorously defend and support transgender patients' access to medically necessary care.

We are aware that currently 22 states have a total of 36 pieces of legislation that address the rights of transgender individuals to have access to care. Although some of these bills ensure transgender Americans receive high quality health care, the majority of these bills prohibit gender-affirming surgery for minors. Arkansas has become the first state to ban gender affirming care for transgender youth and as dermatologic surgeons, we feel that it is imperative to voice our concern about these pieces of legislation, as procedural dermatology is an important aspect of gender affirmation.

Dermatologic surgeons, and all physicians, put the safety and well-being of their patients first. The type of legislation that became law in Arkansas takes away physician and patient autonomy to choose the best treatment options, emboldens other states to pass similar laws and does permanent damage to the gender diverse population since we know access to quality health care is directly linked to the incidence of suicide in this population.

This past November, ASDS / ASDSA finalized its position statement on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the field of dermatology. As an organization, we pledge to support policies that ensure nondiscrimination and are sensitive to the health and well-being of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) / Sexual and Gender Minorities (SGM) individuals; enhance the health of BIPOC and LGBTQ / SGM people; and promote an understanding of issues related to gender expression, gender identity and sexual orientation. We also will be working on initiatives to improve the recruitment, retention, promotion, compensation parity and career development for a diverse physician workforce, especially for those who are underrepresented in medicine or identify as LGBTQ / SGM.ⁱ

It is not only the opinion of dermatologic surgeons that denying gender affirming care to individuals can cause terrible outcomes, but organized medicine collectively understands that these laws will also create mental health crises, which may end in an individual taking their own life. We urge you as the Governor of your state to ensure access to needed care for your

transgender citizens. Should you need further information, please do not hesitate to contact Kristin Hellquist, Director of Advocacy and Practice Affairs, at (847) 956-9144, or by email at khellquist@asds.net.

Sincerely,



Mathew Avram, MD, JD, President
American Society for Dermatologic Surgery Association

cc: Sue Ellen Cox, MD, President-elect
Vince Bertucci, MD, FRCPC, Vice President
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ⁱ ASDS Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Position Statement. <https://www.asds.net/Portals/0/PDF/position-statement-DEI.pdf>