

SAHM

SOCIETY FOR ADOLESCENT
HEALTH AND MEDICINE

April 15, 2016

The Honorable Bill Haslam
Governor of Tennessee
Office of the Governor
1st Floor, State Capitol
Nashville, TN 37243

Dear Governor Haslam,

On behalf of the Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine, I urge you to veto HB 1840. The Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine (SAHM) is a multidisciplinary organization committed to improving the physical and psychosocial health and well-being of all adolescents and young adults through advocacy, clinical care, health promotion, health service delivery, professional development and research. Our organization consists of adolescent health and medical and mental health experts who have years of professional experience working with lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) youth. Research data indicate that LGBT youth have unique health challenges and are over twice as likely as their peers to attempt suicide. We therefore believe that any law that puts up barriers to their ability to receive mental health services and increases stigma is harmful.

The American Counseling Association's Code of Ethics clearly states that counselors may not decline services to a client because of the client's age, race, religion, ethnic background, language spoken, or any basis prescribed by law, including gender identity or sexual orientation.

If HB 1840 were to become law, it would harm thousands of LGBT adolescents and young adults who are looking to access professional counseling services. Allowing physical and mental health providers to withhold care based on their personal beliefs would contradict the recommendations of both the medical and mental health professions. We believe that passage of this bill would single out these vulnerable adolescents and place them at significant risk for the aforementioned tragic short and long-term outcomes.

Based on the results of scientific data, as well as our breadth of knowledge about LGBT youth, the Society of Adolescent Health and Medicine urges you to veto HB 1840 and to stand alongside the rights of all adolescents and young adults who have a right to competent, accessible and inclusive mental health care.

Sincerely,



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