



March 24, 2017

The Honorable Toni Atkins
State Capitol, Room 4072
Sacramento, CA 95814
Fax: (916) 651-4939

RE: SB 179 (Atkins): Gender identity: male, female, or nonbinary
AAP-CA Position: SUPPORT

Dear Senator Atkins:

I am writing on behalf of the American Academy of Pediatrics, California (AAP-CA), representing over 5,000 California pediatricians, to let you know that we strongly support your proposed legislation SB 179 (Atkins). This bill would allow Californians to petition for a legal gender change without having undergone clinical treatment for said purposes, and would also allow these petitioners to also select a nonbinary gender identity, including petitioners under 18 years of age.

While many use the word “gender” as a synonym for biological sex and consider there to be only two options, the reality is more complicated. As written on the American Academy of Pediatrics’ Healthy Children resource site, “Some children have a gender identity that is different from their sex assigned at birth.... Some children, however, do not identify with either gender. They may feel like they are somewhere in between or have no gender.” These feelings can manifest as early as three years of age, and while they sometimes change over time, they often do not. Our pediatrician members can attest that this is perfectly normal, natural, and healthy; indeed, for optimal health outcomes, children and youth should be encouraged to feel confident, comfortable, and supported in their gender identity. However, children and adolescents whose gender identity does not conform to the gender they were assigned at birth often face poor health outcomes because of the social stigma they regularly face. Legal recognition of a person’s true gender can help to diminish this stigma, but current law offers no option for recognition for people who do not identify as either male or female. Moreover, a legal gender change requires clinical treatment for gender transition, which can be costly and invasive—and may not even be what the person in question really desires.

SB 179 (Atkins) would make California a more hospitable place for people of all genders by allowing for the legal recognition of our residents’ true gender identities, without requiring that they first submit to medical treatment they may not be able to afford or wish to undergo. This would make a difference in the lives of gender non-conforming children and youth in California who would grow up knowing that their state sees them for who they are.

Pediatricians across the state strongly support SB 179 (Atkins). We thank you for your leadership on behalf of the health and well-being of children, youth, and families in California.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized, cursive name followed by the initials "MD".

Yasuko Fukuda, M.D., Fellow of the American Academy of Pediatrics
Vice Chair, District IX of the American Academy of Pediatrics
Executive Board, American Academy of Pediatrics, California

CC: Kris Calvin, CEO; AAP-CA Leadership; Lydia Bourne