

May 27, 2019

Assembly Member Gipson  
State Capitol  
P.O. Box 942849  
Sacramento, CA 94249-0064

**RE: AB 175 (Gipson) Foster care: rights**  
**AAP-CA Position: Support**

Dear Assemblymember Gipson,

The American Academy of Pediatrics, representing over 5,000 board-certified pediatrician members of California AAP Chapters 1, 2, 3 and 4, strongly supports your proposed legislation AB 175 revising the Foster Youth Bill of Rights to modernize the Foster Youth Bill of Rights as it relates to including culturally competent care, cultural service and activities, computer technology, and to also ensure that these rights are inclusive of the youth experience and will empower their decision-making. This would include the right for youth in the foster care system to be referred to by the youth's preferred name and gender pronoun, and the right to maintain the privacy of the youth's lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or questioning status and gender identity.

LGBTQ youth compose a significant and disproportionate portion of the foster care population. For example, in Los Angeles there are 13.6% LGBTQ-identified youth in foster care as compared to 7.2% in the general population, and 5.6% transgender youth in foster care compared to 2.25% in the general population. This happens, in part, because LGBTQ children and youth are often forced to leave their homes and families because of hostility toward their sexual orientation or gender identity. These children face additional trauma in the foster care system.

On average, LGBTQ youth experience about twice the number of placements than others. Many are forced to transition from foster home to foster home for fear of prejudice and mistreatment. A study in New York showed that 78% of LGBTQ youth in foster care there either ran away or were removed from a foster placement because they faced hostility towards their sexual orientation and/or gender identity, and 70% of LGBTQ youth in foster care reported physical abuse. These figures are likely representative of the scope of mistreatment that LGBTQ youth in foster care face nationwide, including here in California. For transgender and gender non-conforming children and youth, misgendering is a form of verbal abuse that can have negative consequences for mental health. AB 175 builds on existing law to expand rights and protections for LGBTQ youth and confront the exceptional difficulties they face in the foster care system.

Pediatricians across the state strongly support AB 175. Thank you for your public service and leadership on behalf of the health and wellbeing of the children, youth, and families of California.

Sincerely,



Melissa Ruiz, M.D.  
Governing Board, American Academy of Pediatrics, California

cc: Kris Calvin, CEO; AAP-CA Leadership