

May 25, 2019

Senator Maria Elena Durazo
State Capitol, Room 5066
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SB 495 (Durazo): Child custody.
AAP-CA Position: Support

Dear Senator Durazo:

The American Academy of Pediatrics, California (AAP-CA) representing the over 5,000 board-certified pediatrician members of California AAP Chapters 1, 2, 3 and 4 statewide, strongly supports your proposed legislation SB 495 prohibiting a court from considering sex, gender identity, gender expression, or the sexual orientation of a parent, legal guardian, or relative in making a best interest determination for purposes of awarding child custody or visitation rights.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recognizes and affirms that children benefit most from being raised in a loving, supportive home, irrespective of their parents' gender identities or sexual orientations: "Children need secure and enduring relationships with committed and nurturing adults to enhance their life experiences for optimal social-emotional and cognitive development. Scientific evidence affirms that children have similar developmental and emotional needs and receive similar parenting whether they are raised by parents of the same or different genders" ("Promoting the Well-Being of Children Whose Parents Are Gay or Lesbian," *Pediatrics*, April 2013). It naturally follows that sex, gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation of a parent, guardian or relative should be immaterial in a custody or visitation decision, as they have no bearing on what should always be paramount: the best interests of the child. However, current law does not explicitly prohibit this, which leaves children vulnerable to unsuitable custody or visitation agreements. SB 495 would remedy this legal oversight by prohibiting that sex, gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation be considered by the court during custody and visitation proceedings.

Pediatricians across the state of California strongly support your proposed legislation SB 495.

Thank you for your public service and leadership on behalf of the health and well-being of the children, youth, and families of California.

Sincerely,



Kris Calvin
Chief Executive Officer
American Academy of Pediatrics, California

Cc: AAP-CA Leadership; AAPCA Advocate Lydia Bourne