

# Why the AMA's standing up for LGBTQ rights in the Supreme Court

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**What's the news:** Oral arguments were held today in the U.S. Supreme Court in the case of *R.G. & G.R. Harris Funeral Homes Inc. v. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission*. The case involves a funeral-home director who was fired after informing the owner that they planned to begin a gender transition. The legal question at issue is whether the 1964 Civil Rights Act's Title VII protections apply to sexual orientation and gender identity.

Earlier this year, the AMA filed an amicus brief in the case arguing that they do and should, and AMA President Patrice A. Harris, MD, MA, today published an op-ed in *The Advocate* urging the Supreme Court justices to "do the right thing" in the case.

**Why it matters for patients and physicians:** About 1.4 million adults and 150,000 teenagers identify as transgender, Dr. Harris noted in the op-ed.

"These individuals frequently face discrimination and bias in everyday life, from employment and social services to health care," she wrote. "The AMA opposes any discrimination based on sex, sexual orientation or gender identity, and supports public and private health insurance coverage for treating the gender dysphoria these individuals may experience.

"Employment discrimination against transgender people frustrates the treatment of gender dysphoria by preventing transgender individuals from living openly in accordance with their true gender identity and impeding access to needed medical care," Dr. Harris added.

While significant progress has been made on equal treatment for women, people of color and LGBTQ people since the Civil Rights Act became law 55 years ago, more remains to be done.

"We must not reverse these gains and return to an era when some communities lived in fear of

constant harassment and workplace discrimination,” Dr. Harris wrote. “As physicians, and as leaders in medicine, we must always be vigilant and protect our patients from discrimination, ensuring that medicine remains a safe and welcoming place for all.”

**What’s next:** Read the amicus brief filed by the AMA, the American College of Physicians and 14 other medical, mental and health care organizations. The U.S. 6th Circuit Court of Appeals effectively ruled that employment discrimination based on gender identity is a type of sex discrimination banned by Title VII. The Supreme Court will consider today’s oral arguments and the briefs filed in the case, and issue a ruling by the end of the court’s term in June 2020.