

April 18, 2019: State Advocacy Update

District of Columbia, New Jersey take steps to save lives, reverse the opioid epidemic

State officials in the District of Columbia (PDF) and New Jersey recently took significant steps to improve patient care for persons with an opioid use disorder, including removing prior authorization for MAT.

The Medical Society of the District of Columbia (MSDC) and the AMA commended Mayor Muriel Bowser, Department of Health Care Finance Director Wayne Turnage and Medicaid Director Melisa Byrd.

Similarly, the AMA commended the actions by New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy and state Human Services Commissioner Carole Johnson. "Now it's time for commercial health insurance companies to follow suit and remove prior authorization for medication assisted treatment," said Patrice A. Harris, MD, MA, Chair AMA Opioid Task Force and President-elect of the AMA.

Massachusetts bans conversion therapy, protects LGBTQ youth

On April 8, Massachusetts Gov. Charlie Baker signed into law a bill that prohibits the practice of conversion therapy on minors. Massachusetts is the 16th state to enact such a ban. Conversion therapy refers to any form of interventions which attempt to change an individual's sexual orientation, sexual behaviors, gender identity or gender expression. Underlying this practice is the harmful assumption that homosexuality and gender dysphoria are mental disorders that should be treated. Evidence has shown it is a coercive practice that may cause long-term psychological harm, particularly to young patients.

The AMA opposes the use of conversion therapy and joined the Massachusetts Medical Society in supporting the legislation. Under the new law, licensed health care professionals are prohibited from engaging in sexual orientation and gender identity change efforts with a patient less than 18 years of

age. The prohibition does not apply to interventions that facilitate a patient's coping, social support, identity development, or address unlawful conduct or unsafe sexual practices.

For more information about AMA advocacy for the LGBTQ community, visit the AMA website.

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