

## March 12, 2020: State Advocacy Update

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### Maine voters uphold vaccination law

On Nov. 3, voters in Maine overwhelmingly voted to uphold a 2019 law that eliminated all non-medical exemptions for required school and health care employment vaccines. Opponents of the law sought to overturn it via a "people's veto" referendum. The referendum was defeated soundly with approximately 73% of voters supporting the law. The AMA and Maine Medical Association (MMA) strongly supported the "Vote No" campaign.

In a joint op-ed published in the *Portland Press Herald*, AMA President Patrice Harris, MD, and MMA President Amy Madden, MD, said, "Extensive medical and scientific research has proven that vaccines are safe and effective compared to the high rates of serious complications and death that result from the diseases they are designed to prevent: polio, meningitis, measles, tetanus, diphtheria, mumps, rubella, chickenpox and whooping cough. These complications far outweigh the very rare side effects of vaccines." For additional information about vaccination laws in your state, please contact the Advocacy Resource Center.

### Virginia becomes 20th state to ban conversion therapy

On March 2, Virginia Governor Ralph Northam signed into law a bill that prohibits the practice of conversion therapy on minors. Virginia is the 20th 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 the 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. 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 coping, support, or identity exploration and development or address unlawful conduct or unsafe sexual practices.

Learn more about AMA advocacy for the LGBTQ community.

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