

# With new president, strong signs on LGBTQ inclusion and health

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**Kevin B. O'Reilly**

News Editor

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**What's the news:** In another early executive order, President Joe Biden moved to reverse a ban on transgender people serving openly in the U.S. military. The AMA applauded the move, and also is supporting the nomination of Rachel Levine, MD, the Pennsylvania health secretary and pediatrician. Dr. Levine would be the first openly transgender federal official, if confirmed by the U.S. Senate.

“The AMA welcomes the president’s decision to reverse the policy that largely barred transgender people from serving in the military because there is no medically valid reason to exclude them,” said AMA President Susan R. Bailey, MD. “Transgender people have served our country with honor, and they should be allowed to continue doing so. Ending this discriminatory policy is a win for all patriotic Americans who want to serve their country.”

In 2019, the Department of Defense (DoD) characterized the need to undergo gender transition as a “deficiency.” The regulation also instructed service secretaries to add gender dysphoria to service-specific lists of “administratively disqualifying conditions” that DoD regulations label “congenital or developmental defects.”

But “the only thing deficient,” said then-AMA President Barbara L. McAneny, MD, was “any medical science behind this decision.”

**Why it's important:** Nearly 15,000 transgender military personnel, it is estimated, are qualified and willing to serve. As Dr. McAneny said in 2019, “there is no medically valid reason—including a diagnosis of gender dysphoria—to exclude transgender individuals from military service. Transgender service members should, as is the case with all personnel, receive the medical care they need. There is a global medical consensus about the efficacy of transgender health care, including treatment for gender dysphoria.”

Find out more about the AMA's advocacy with the Pentagon on transgender service in the military.

Meanwhile, the AMA declared its strong support for the nomination of Dr. Levine, who would serve as the assistant secretary for health in the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

"Dr. Levine has been a leader in combating the opioid epidemic and spearheading Pennsylvania's response to COVID-19," said Russ Kridel, MD, chair of the AMA Board of Trustees. "She has extensive experience in government, including service as Pennsylvania's physician general. If confirmed, she would be the highest-ranking transgender official in the U.S. government—a strong, inclusive message to America's LGBTQ community."

The AMA also supports Biden's nominees for HHS secretary—California Attorney General Xavier Becerra—and surgeon general. The latter is Vivek Murthy, MD, who previously served as surgeon general under President Barack Obama and worked closely with the AMA on numerous issues during his previous tenure.

**Learn more:** In his first day in office, President Biden took action to prohibit workplace discrimination on the basis of gender identity or sexual orientation. "We were proud to join 15 other leading health organizations in an amicus brief to the Supreme Court in the recent Title VII case, and we are encouraged by today's action by the Biden administration to ensure equality," Dr. Bailey said at the time.

The AMA Advisory Committee on LGBTQ Issues highlights LGBTQ news and topics related to patients and physicians.

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