



Brenda Fitzgerald, MD
Director
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
1600 Clifton Road
Atlanta, GA 30329

VIA facsimile: 404-639-7111

Dear Dr. Fitzgerald:

On behalf of the thousands of healthcare professionals who are part of GLMA: Health Professionals Advancing LGBT Equality, we urge you to quickly issue a statement that emphatically and unequivocally states the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention will continue to use science-based approaches to improve the health and well-being of the full diversity of the American population, including transgender individuals.

GLMA members were dismayed and outraged to hear the widely reported news from last week that CDC officials were told not to use certain words, including the word “transgender.” Your email to staff and social media posts declaring there are no banned words at the CDC were certainly steps in the direction of refuting the notion that the CDC has abandoned its science-based approaches to benefit all Americans. But nothing short of a clear, strong statement such as we’ve suggested will fully put this issue to rest and allow the agency to get back on track toward reaching its mission.

As an organization of health professionals who serve and care for patients and clients from the transgender community and/or are from the community ourselves, we know first-hand the significant health disparities and concerns that affect transgender communities.¹ Respected sources including the National Academy of Medicine² (formerly the Institute of Medicine), Healthy People 2020 and the CDC itself have reported on the health risks for transgender people including³:

- High rates of bias-related violence;⁴
- High rates of smoking and other substance use;⁵
- High rates of HIV among transgender women, especially transgender women of color;⁶

¹ See, e.g., *GLMA’s Top 10 Health Issues Facing Transgender People*, available at <http://www.glma.org/top10transgenderhealth>.

² See, e.g., Institute of Medicine, *The Health of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender People: Building a Foundation for Better Understanding* (2011), available at <http://www.iom.edu/Reports/2011/The-Health-of-Lesbian-Gay-Bisexual-and-Transgender-People.aspx>.

³ U.S. Dep’t of Health and Human Services, *Healthy People 2020: LGBT Health Topic Area* (2015).

⁴ Rebecca L. Stotzer, *Violence Against Transgender People: A Review of United States Data* (2009), available at <https://faculty.mu.edu.sa/public/uploads/1425310920.5389violence%20transgender.pdf>

⁵ Buchting FO, Emory KT, Scout, Kim Y, Fagan P, Vera LE, Emery S. *Transgender Use of Cigarettes, Cigars, and E-cigarettes in a National Study* (2017), available at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/28094133>.

⁶ Jeffrey H. Herbst, Elizabeth D. Jacobs, Teresa J. Finlayson, Vel S. McKleroy, Mary . Neumann, and Nicole Crepez, *Estimating HIV Prevalence and Risk Behaviors of Transgender Persons in the United States: A Systemic Review* (2007), available at https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Nicole_Crepaz/publication/6146004_Estimating_HIV_Prevalence_and_Risk_Behaviors_of_Transgender_Persons_in_the_United_States_A_Systematic_Review/links/02bfe50e5b2828ee3e000000.pdf.

- Barriers to health insurance coverage;⁷ and
- Lack of access to basic medical services, including preventive care.⁸

The national consensus about recognizing the health needs of transgender populations is reflected in the large number of leading medical and mental health associations that have adopted policy and protocols promoting adequate care for transgender individuals. These associations include: the American Medical Association, American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecology, American Public Health Association, American College of Physicians, American Academy of Physician Assistants, American Nurses Association, American Academy of Nursing, American Academy of Pediatrics, American Psychiatric Association, American Psychological Association and the National Association of Social Workers.

To ban words specific to transgender health evokes an era that GLMA and the LGBT communities it represents and serves already experienced to disastrous consequences. The federal government's slow response to the AIDS epidemic, evidenced in part by the refusal of many federal officials including at the highest levels to utter the word "AIDS," fomented the stigma and discrimination against people with AIDS, and the whole LGBT community, that contributed to thousands of preventable deaths. We cannot let this happen again; too many transgender people are already at elevated risk for poor health outcomes and death.

As a physician with considerable experience in public health, you understand the importance of addressing the social determinants of health and of using the right words in doing the work of public health. As the leader of the CDC, you understand that the agency's mission includes serving *all* Americans and that this mission is compromised when any community cannot even be mentioned by name.

On behalf of GLMA's members, we therefore urge you to issue a statement that specifically names transgender people as a community served by the CDC and its programs. The lives of transgender Americans the CDC exists to protect will be lost if the agency cannot formally state that its mission includes this community.

Sincerely,



Gal Mayer, MD, MS
President



Hector Vargas, JD
Executive Director

⁷ Laura E. Durso, Kellan E. Baker, and Andrew Cray, *LGBT Communities and the Affordable Care Act: Findings from a National Survey* (2013), available at <http://www.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/LGBT-ACA-survey-brief1.pdf>.

⁸ Joshua D. Safer, Eli Coleman, Jamie Feldman, Robert Garofalo, Wylie Hembree, Asa Radix, and Jae Sevelius, *Barriers to Health Care for Transgender Individuals* (2016), available at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4802845/>.