From: The Executive Committee of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Caucus of Public Health Professionals

To: Georges C. Benjamin, MD, FACP, FNAPA, FACEP (E), Hon FRSPH
    Executive Director
    American Public Health Association

Date: May 22, 2012

Dear Dr. Benjamin:

On May 8, 2012, the citizens of North Carolina voted to amend their state constitution to prohibit marriage between same sex individuals, as well as other forms of legal relationship recognition aside from marriage between one man and one woman.\(^1\) North Carolina is now the 31\(^{st}\) state with language in its constitution that prevents marriage equality.

As the annual midyear meeting of the American Public Health Association (APHA) is being held in Charlotte, NC this year, the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Caucus of Public Health Professionals (“the Caucus”) wanted to highlight the consequences of this amendment. The stated mission of the APHA is to “improve the health of the public and achieve equity in health status.”\(^2\) We firmly believe APHA has and will continue to adhere to this mission. It is for this reason that the Caucus takes this opportunity to raise several important points:

- The myriad of LGBT health disparities are largely influenced by structural inequalities at the policy level.\(^3,4\) These inequalities permeate the lives of LGBT people and their influence ranges from employment discrimination, reduced access to health insurance and health care, and the denial of hundreds of benefits afforded to couples whose relationships are recognized by law. In turn, these inequalities contribute to increased suicides, substance use, obesity, certain cancers, and many other negative health outcomes.\(^5,6\)

- Living in a state that has legalized marriage equality has shown to be beneficial for the health of sexual minority men regardless of their own relationship status.\(^7\)
• Even in areas without marriage equality, LGBT individuals who live in a state where a constitutional amendment prohibits marriage equality have greater amounts of psychiatric disorders than those LGBT individuals who live in states without similar bans.\textsuperscript{8} The passage of the amendment in North Carolina will have an active and adverse effect on the health of the state’s LGBT population.

Given the scientific evidence detailing the deleterious health effects of discriminatory policies, and APHA’s commitment to addressing health inequities, the Caucus asks that APHA demonstrate its support to the health and well-being of LGBT North Carolinians and the broader LGBT community. Though many organizations and businesses are expressing their solidarity by leaving or otherwise discontinuing their patronage of North Carolina, we call on APHA to do precisely the opposite and:

1. Use the timely opportunity afforded by the mid-year meeting to make a public statement that details the harmful health effects of this amendment, and of all similar policies on the health of LGBT people

2. Send an official letter to the North Carolina legislature that both details the harmful health effects of this amendment and affirms APHA’s stand against such amendments

3. Continue APHA’s work towards achieving equity in health status by encouraging the inclusion of LGBT persons in all aspects of public health.

The LGBT Caucus of Public Health professionals is more than willing to extend whatever assistance is necessary to accomplish these items. We welcome your response.

Sincerely,

Grant W. Farmer, MPH, MA
Chair, LGBT Caucus of Public Health Professionals
On behalf of the Executive Committee of the LGBT Caucus of Public Health Professionals

CC: Melvin D. Shipp, OD, MPH, DrPH – APHA President
Adewale Troutman, MD, MPH, MA, CPH – APHA President-Elect
Thomas Quade, MA, MPH, CPH – APHA Executive Board Vice-Chair
References


   http://www.apha.org/about/gov/execboard/executiveboardvisionmission.htm.


