

PES Statement Promoting Access to Healthcare for All Children

The Pediatric Endocrine Society (PES), the leading professional society for pediatric endocrinologists in the United States, strongly opposes the establishment of the “Conscience and Religious Freedom Division” in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office for Civil Rights (announced on January 18, 2018). This Division was developed to protect health care providers who refuse to perform, accommodate, or assist with certain health care services on religious or moral grounds.

Health care providers must first and foremost treat the sick to the best of their ability. According to the American Medical Association Principles of Medical Ethics: **“A physician shall be dedicated to providing competent medical care, with compassion and respect for human dignity and rights. A physician shall support access to medical care for all people.”** These principles must be upheld regardless of the reproductive history, sexual orientation, or gender identity of the patient.

As medical providers for youth in the LGBTQ community and those born with a difference of sex development, we have seen the discrimination and safety concerns that these populations face in the medical setting. Refusal to provide medical treatment for these youth may lead to physical or mental illness that may have been preventable, and could augment their already-high risk of suicide. We are concerned that the establishment of this office would serve to legitimize discrimination against these very vulnerable populations. Potentially denying these youth access to healthcare is a violation of human rights and of the ethical principles of beneficence and justice, and sends a message of intolerance that will promote further discrimination and segregation.

The mission of PES is “to advance and promote the endocrine health and well-being of children and adolescents.” We believe the rights and safety of ALL children and adolescents to equal access to medical care is paramount. In summary, we strongly oppose the creation of the Conscience and Religious Freedom Division within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.