

American Academy of Pediatrics



DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN®

West Virginia Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics
INCORPORATED IN WV

WV Chapter AAP

Robert C Byrd HSC
PO Box 9214 – Suite 2350
Morgantown, WV 26506
Phone: 304/612-3314
Fax: 304/293-5491
E-mail: chamilton@aap.net

The Honorable Members of the West Virginia State Legislature
West Virginia State Capital Complex
Charleston, WV 25305

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West Virginia Chapter Executive Committee

President

Traci Acklin, MD, FAAP
401 6th Avenue, Suite 101
Montgomery, WV 25136
Phone: 304/442-8516
Fax: 304/442-0212
Email: dracklin@mghwv.org

Vice President

Lisa M. Costello, MD, MPH, FAAP
812 Cottonwood Street
Morgantown, WV 26505
Phone: 304/670-1030
Email: costello.lisa@gmail.com
Twitter: @LisaCostelloWV

Secretary/Treasurer

Beth Bloom Emrick, MD, FAAP
830 Pennsylvania Avenue,
Suite 104
Charleston, WV, 25302
Phone: 304/338-1552
Fax: 304/388-1565
Email: beemrick@hsc.wvu.edu

Chapter Executive Director

Candice Hamilton, MPH
PO Box 9214 – Suite 2350
Morgantown, WV 26506
Phone: 304/612-3314
Fax: 304/293-5491
Email: chamilton@aap.net

Immediate Past President

John Phillips, MD, FAAP
PO Box 9214 – Suite 2350
Morgantown, WV 26506
Phone: 304/293-7036
Fax: 304/293-1409
Email: jphillips@hsc.wvu.edu

Chapter Web Site

www.wvaap.com

Dear West Virginia Legislators,

On behalf of the West Virginia American Academy of Pediatrics (WV AAP), a non-profit organization of more than 290 primary care pediatricians, Pediatric medical subspecialists and pediatric surgical specialists dedicated to the health, safety and well-being of infants, children, adolescents and young adults, I write to express our support of The Youth Mental Health Protection Act.

All children and adolescents deserve the opportunity to learn and develop in a safe and supportive environment. “Conversion”, or “reparative therapy” is never indicated for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning (LGBTQ) youth. This therapy is not effective and has been deemed harmful to LGBTQ individuals by increasing internalized stigma, distress, and depression. The WV AAP supports your efforts through the Youth Mental Health Protection Act to prohibit mental health professionals who try to engage in “sexual orientation change efforts” with patients.

Homophobia and heterosexism inherent in conversion therapy can contribute to health disparities as marginalization negatively affects the health, mental health, and education of those who experience it. Struggles with self-image and self-esteem result in significant health disparities for sexual minority youth related to depression and suicidality, substance abuse, social anxiety, altered body image, and other health issues.

The WV AAP is focused on meeting three of every child and adolescent’s most basic needs: sound nutrition, nurturing relationships and safe environments. We are pleased to support the Youth Mental Health Protection Act because it will protect sexual minority youth from the harms of “conversion” or “reparative “therapy. If the AAP can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact myself or our Executive Director, Candice Hamilton.

Sincerely,

Traci Boyd Acklin, MD, FAAP
President, WV AAP