



May 3, 2017

Heather Menne
Administration for Community Living
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Ms. Menne,

AcademyHealth welcomes the opportunity to comment on the elimination of questions about lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people from the National Survey of Older Americans Act Participants and the Annual Program Performance Report for Centers for Independent Living. We are the nonpartisan, professional home to more than 4,000 health services researchers, policy analysts, and practitioners working to learn how our health system works, how to support patients and providers in choosing the right care, and how to improve health through health care and other strategies. As such, we are deeply committed to the production, availability, and use of high-quality data – data that is secure, comprehensive, timely, and relevant – to ensure we have the greatest possible understanding of the factors affecting Americans and their health and health care.

Any shift away from robust data collection, production, and a commitment to make these data widely available is of grave concern. Furthermore, any efforts that lead to data suppression, by limiting collection or availability or targeting particular types of data, is counter to the public interest and limit our nation's ability to assess and improve the health of our population. When this happens, our society suffers.

Improving our health system and the health of the American people depends on solid evidence and the data that enable researchers to carry out their work. We owe it to American taxpayers to make the most of their dollars and to do our part to ensure they receive the best care possible, at the greatest value, with the best outcomes – and we can only do this if researchers, analysts, and other data users have access to reliable data.

As an organization whose mission centers on the production and use of robust, timely, and comprehensive evidence, AcademyHealth asks that the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) reconsider the elimination of these questions before enacting policies that could negatively affect the research enterprise. The questions under consideration have the ability to provide us with insight into the effectiveness and equity of safety net programs. Policies throughout the federal government should facilitate and promote scientists' access to data for research development, ensuring that we are supporting all efforts to continually improve health and the performance of the health system.



Thank you again for the opportunity to submit these comments and for your consideration. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lisa Simpson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Lisa" and last name "Simpson" clearly distinguishable.

Lisa Simpson, MB, BCh, MPH, FAAP
President and CEO, AcademyHealth