



GLMA
GAY & LESBIAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

The leader in LGBT Health for 25 Years

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**GLMA DECRIES DECISION BY TOURO UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF OSTEOPATHIC MEDICINE
TO BAN GAY STRAIGHT ALLIANCE STUDENT GROUP**
Pledges to seek relief for students of banned organization

SAN FRANCISCO –September 9, 2006–The Gay and Lesbian Medical Association today publicly decried the decision of the Touro University College of Osteopathic Medicine, a private medical school in Vallejo, CA, to ban a student group that focuses on the needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) patients and students.

In 2002, students at the school formed the Touro University Gay-Straight Alliance (TUGSA) with the mission of “promoting equitable health care delivery through awareness and education, and . . . representing diversity both on campus and in medicine.” This month, Touro’s administration, citing the school’s Orthodox Jewish heritage, suddenly revoked the group’s charter and rescinded its funding, which had already been approved.

“This situation is reminiscent of the decision of New York Medical College to ban its LGBT student group in 2004 based on that school’s Roman Catholic heritage,” GLMA’s Executive Director, Joel Ginsberg, JD, MBA, stated. “However, after long discussions, the NYMC administration recognized that the LGBT community continues to be marginalized in healthcare and reinstated the group. As a result of this situation, the American Medical Association updated its policies to state that the AMA ‘supports the right of medical students and residents to form groups and meet on-site to further their medical education or enhance patient care without regard to their gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, religion, disability, ethnic origin, national origin or age.’”

Bryan Hopping, a second-year medical student at Touro, said: “It’s disturbing how out of touch the Touro administration is, because the students and faculty are overwhelmingly supportive of us. I’ve been really touched by conservative students who have come up to me and said, ‘this club has made me aware of my own homophobia – thank you.’”

Hopping continued: “The LGBT community has a unique set of health issues that young doctors-to-be need to know about, so that LGBT people get the care they’re entitled to, just like any other group.”

The Healthy People 2010 Companion Document on LGBT Health, commissioned by the US Department of Health and Human Services, documents a number of health disparities experienced by LGBT persons as a result of their sexual orientation or gender identity. According to Ginsberg, “many of these disparities are associated with the fear or outright discrimination LGBT persons experience when they reveal their sexual orientation or gender identity to their healthcare providers.”

“One of the major goals of our 25th anniversary conference to be held in San Francisco October 11-14, ‘Bringing LGBT Healthcare into the Mainstream,’ is to counter the false notion that LGBT health is an exotic area of health. All physicians encounter LGBT patients in their practices and need to know how to care for them as for all their patients.

“Modeling discriminatory attitudes in medical education perpetuates fear and discrimination against LGBT people generally and undermines the health of LGBT patients. We at GLMA hope that the administration at Touro University – which states that its ‘values involve a commitment to social justice, intellectual pursuit, and service to humanity’ – will discuss this very serious issue with us. In the meantime, we continue to explore other ways of raising awareness about this issue in the hopes that these students will eventually get the learning environment they need and deserve.”

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For 25 years, the Gay and Lesbian Medical Association has worked to ensure equality in health care for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender patients and health professionals. For more information, call 415-255-4547 or visit www.glma.org.