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December 18, 2017

Eric D. Hargan
Acting Secretary
Department of Health and Human Services
U.S. Department of Health & Human Services
Hubert H. Humphrey Building
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Acting Secretary Hargan:

On behalf of the physician and medical student members of the American Medical Association (AMA), I am writing about reports that agencies of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) have been advised to refrain from using certain language in developing their FY 2019 budget recommendations. The AMA strongly recommends that the HHS issue a more detailed clarification in response to these reports, to reassure the American people that the health care principles and objectives captured by these broadly used and accepted terms retain their central focus in its agencies' work.

The mission of Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, for example, is to "fight disease and support communities and citizens to do the same." Certainly principles like "evidence-based" and "science-based" are essential to the validity of the agency's work, while the other reportedly banned terms such as "vulnerable," "diversity," "transgender," "fetus" and "entitlement" pertain to its relevance and effectiveness. Political sensitivities must not be allowed to obfuscate the priorities and core purposes of government programs that are vital to protecting and improving the health of the nation.

Efforts to dictate the language used by HHS agencies potentially harms patients and does a disservice to the American people. The AMA encourages HHS, if these reports are accurate, to aim its focus not on a list of words but on shoring up the important mission of its agencies.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James L. Madara". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

James L. Madara, MD