

July 15, 2008

Dear Senator:

The American Bar Association urges you to vote against an amendment sponsored by Senator Jeff Sessions to strike a provision in S. 2731 that would repeal a ban on HIV-positive visitors to the United States. S. 2731, the Tom Lantos and Henry J. Hyde United States Global Leadership Against HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria Reauthorization Act of 2008, provides critically needed funding for global efforts to fight HIV/AIDS and offers an opportunity to address this long-standing discriminatory provision in our own immigration law.

The ABA opposes discrimination against immigrants, non-immigrant visitors, asylees, and refugees that is based solely on their HIV status. The United States remains one of only 12 countries that continue to impose such a ban — a 20-year-old vestige of misunderstanding that serves to perpetuate irrational stigma and discrimination against people with HIV or AIDS. Over 200 organizations, including the American Medical Association, the World Health Organization, and the American Public Health Association, have opposed the ban. As summed up by Dr. Mark Kline, head of retrovirology at Baylor College of Medicine and director of the school's AIDS International Training and Research Program, “[t]here is no scientific basis whatsoever for the [HIV] travel ban, and there never has been.” (*Kaiser Daily HIV/AIDS Report*, Mar. 25, 2008.)

HIV remains the only medical condition singled out in the Immigration and Nationality Act as a ground of inadmissibility. As currently drafted, S. 2731 would remove this unfair and unnecessary provision from U.S. law. We strongly encourage you and your colleagues to vote against the Sessions Amendment that would strike that language.

Sincerely,



Thomas M. Susman
Director