

Submitter: Rory Bowman

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

Measure: HB2458

The phrase "conversion therapy" has a very specific historical origin, used mostly in the 1980's for aversive physical therapies intended to cause trauma and dissuade homosexuals from their innate sexual orientation. Conversion therapy was always a fringe practice, roundly criticized in the 1990's, and has not been practiced by any reputable clinician for twenty years or more. To hijack that phrase and weaponize it against standard, exploratory therapy into a person's thoughts and motives is grossly ahistorical and immoral.

People have anxiety around issues of gender for multiple reasons, particularly when they do not meet sexist stereotypes and hetero-normative assumptions. Some of the more common reasons for such anxiety are social anxiety from autism, trauma from sexual assault and bullying, or anxiety about nascent homosexual attraction. Addressing such issues for reasons of insight and differential diagnoses is key, and Homeward bound. 2458 makes that customary therapy illegal, dramatically restricting therapists from providing standard care well within professional standards.

Theories about "gender identity" are fairly modern and not well studied within current literature or practice, certainly not to the extent that sexual orientation was for decades before conversion therapy was previously deprecated. In the absence of any active conversion therapy or evidence base, it makes no sense to pass a law calling normal exploratory therapy "conversion therapy."

There is no need for this law, given the absence of anti-homosexual conversion therapy, and expanding the definition of this term to standard exploratory therapy is a major interference with standard clinical practice. Homeward bound. 2458 is not only unnecessary, but positively counterproductive, in that it will disrupt the deliver of standard, exploratory therapy around diverse anxieties.

Homeward bound. 2458 should be rejected immediately and with extreme prejudice, allowing therapists to do their jobs and exercise professional judgment.