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On Behalf Of:

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When I was 14, I was outed to the faith community my family was a member of. My parents and the church placed me in conversion therapy. This consisted of a special religious program for boys to teach me "proper" gender roles and assigned me a "therapist" who was supposed to help make me straight through the use of psychology and Christian counseling. It did not make me straight. What it did do was succeed in making me feel more like an outcast, both in the eyes of god, my family, my community, and myself. It was a fracture of the trust I had placed in a community I once thought I was a part of, that would always be there for me. The therapy created within me a struggle between forces I had no control over (the way others viewed me and my sexuality) and my complicated and messy teenage emotions and hormones which could do nothing but tell me "this is who you are attracted to." I would pray before bed nightly, angry that god wouldn't take it from me...angry at myself because the therapist had said I wasn't trying hard enough...evidenced by the "numerous" boys who had been "cured" of their "spiritual perversions" just like I had. I couldn't see a future living this way. I was bullied for being gay at school, ostracized by the church for being a sinner (a "sodomite" was the word they used), and rejected by my parents who made it clear that their love was not unconditional.

Conversion therapy places the "failure" of the treatment on the individual. If it doesn't work, it's because you didn't believe hard enough. I thought I had failed at the "treatment" that was supposed to "fix" me. I didn't know that the treatment wasn't evidence based and harmful, all I knew was that an "expert" was telling me I was broken and something was wrong with me. These feelings of hopelessness ultimately led me to attempt suicide. Thankfully I didn't succeed. Later, I sought out an ACTUAL mental health professional as an adult who told me I was okay being who I was, affirmed that there was nothing wrong with me, and that my sexuality wasn't something to be ashamed of. With the help of proper therapy, I was able to heal the wounds this harmful practice caused. I later went to graduate school (the first in my family to go to college at all) and ultimately became a psychologist in the State of Oregon to help others who are struggling, marginalized, or oppressed.

Conversion therapy is harmful. Individuals who are subjected to conversion therapy have higher rates of suicide, drug abuse, and depression than their peers who are not. It preys on the insecurities and fears of caregivers, cloaked in the protection of religion and faith, while ultimately harming youth. No professional organization with any scientific support in the US, Canada, or Europe supports its use to change gender identity or sexuality in children OR adults. I support a ban on conversion

therapy in Oregon. If people TRULY care about protecting youth as they say, they'd prefer their children ALIVE, no matter what their sexual orientation or gender identity may be.