

Submitter: Tiffany Kettermann
On Behalf Of: Health Allies Counseling
Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care
Measure: HB2458

Members of the House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care

I am a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) and the Director of a private practice with 25 mental health counselors, many of whom identify with the LGBTQIA+ community, and all of whom serve that community in our work as therapists. I am writing to implore you to pass this bill protecting adults from anti-conversion therapy.

Every single human being deserves access to ethical, evidence-based healthcare. Conversion therapy is not evidence based healthcare. It is not healthcare. It is the practice of being with someone in their most vulnerable state (when they come to therapy needing to share their most personal conflicts and distress), and using that space to attempt to influence them to change at their innermost being - their gender identity, their sexual identity, and sexual expression. The religious context in which this bill is opposed by some...makes the bill even more compelling and more needed, not less. .

As therapists, we are called to care for our clients in a way that puts aside our own agendas - our religious background, our sexual orientation, our beliefs - and supports our clients in becoming their authentic selves so that they can feel whole and healthy and healed. It is only in an open, non-judgmental space that our clients can find that space for themselves.. Conversion therapy, especially under the guise of religious freedom by therapists who have a religious agenda against gender and sexual expression, is the opposite of that commitment as therapists. Our ethics in fact call us to not treat those clients where we cannot remain objective. The anti-conversion bill is a call for therapists to remain true to the ethics of our profession. It does not stop vulnerable adults from exploring their orientation, or expression, or beliefs - whatever those may be, It simply protects vulnerable people from those in a powerful position with an agenda that only aligns with a specific religious directive.

Moreover, it cannot be ignored, that our current law which is meant to protect children, is being abused when a therapist with a religious agenda sees the adult parent of a child who is struggling with gender identity and sexual expression, and that therapist aids that parent in attempting to direct the child to an acceptable form of sexual expression, or an acceptable gender. We as therapists know that exists in this state still. This is abuse that is currently protected by law.

No therapist or counselor who is licensed by the state should be allowed to use their religious beliefs to encourage people to try to change who they are or who they love.

Please pass this bill.

Thank you.

Tiffany Kettermann, LPC, LMHC, CADCI