



TO: House Behavioral Health and Health Care Committee
FR: Gianna Russo-Mitma, LMFT, COPACT President
DA: February 9, 2023
RE: HB 2458

Chair Nosse, Vice-Chairs Nelson and Goodwin, and members of the committee,

The Coalition of Professional Associations of Counselors and Therapists (COPACT) advocates for Licensed Professional Counselors, Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists, LPC and LMFT Associates, students, and retirees in Oregon. These clinicians work daily to support the mental health of our clients and communities through their work in agencies, universities, corrections, health clinics, rehabilitation, and private practice.

On behalf of LPCs and LMFTs of COPACT, **we write in support of HB 2458.** Oregon counselors and therapists are deeply grateful that the Oregon Legislature is addressing the issue of delegitimizing conversion therapy for all Oregonians this session.

Under the current law, it is illegal for a licensed professional to provide conversion therapy to Oregonians under 18 years old. **Conversion therapy is a deeply harmful practice** that has shown to cause increased depression symptoms and increased suicidal ideations and attempts for those who have participated in it, according to a [recent study](#) by the UCLA School of Law. This directly contradicts what counseling and therapy is utilized for. Supporting someone in their mental health should not come with increased shame, suicidality, and isolation, especially from a professional in power. Many national mental health and physical health [associations have advocated](#) that conversion therapy is a dangerous practice.

Allowing conversion therapy to occur in trusted spaces of counseling and therapy is risky and unethical. Under the ACA Code of Ethics, some of the fundamental principles for ethical behavior in work with clients includes Nonmaleficence (avoiding actions that cause harm), Beneficence (working for the good of the individual and society by promoting mental health and well-being), and Justice (fostering fairness and equality).

COPACT strongly urges the Oregon legislature to support HB 2458. Doing so will support our LGBTQ communities and model to our most vulnerable citizens that they matter and their

care and treatment should not further threaten their mental health or make them feel invalid in our communities or society.

Thank you for tackling this urgent and important matter. On behalf of the thousands of counselors and therapists across Oregon, COPACT strongly supports HB 2458 and urges Committee members to move it to the floor with a DO PASS recommendation.

References:

HRC Foundation (2023). *The Lies and Dangers of Efforts to Change Sexual Orientation or Gender Identity*. Human Rights Campaign.

<https://www.hrc.org/resources/the-lies-and-dangers-of-reparative-therapy>

UCLA School of Law Williams Institute (August 2020). *Suicide Prevention Month: A summary of data on LGBT suicide*.

<https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/press/suicide-prevention-media-alert/>