

Submitter: Kelly Grace

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

Measure: HB2458

As an Oregonian, a licensed marriage and family therapist, a mother, a local adjunct college professor, a board-recognized clinical supervisor, and an LGBTQIA+ ally, I support the passing of House Bill 2458 to prohibit the practice of conversion therapy on minors.

This bill is not against families or spirituality or political affiliations. This bill does not compel or encourage children to transition genders. It is not against families making informed healthcare decisions with their children. This bill is not against trauma-informed therapeutic interventions involving gender development with kids.

This bill stops a manipulative, coercive, under-informed, harmful practice called conversion therapy. With its passing, this bill can also reduce the spread of negative consequences from conversion therapy. The enactment of this bill could reduce self-harm and suicidality, associated with the impact and aftermath of conversion therapy. This bill could save lives and improve the quality of life in families for children and adolescents who need time and space to process and express their gender development. This bill could help families see that the avenue of conversion therapy is not a safe nor spiritual path forward but rather a spiritual facade on a corrupted framework of false facts that ultimately demands compliance rather than an ability to heal. Conversion therapy is not effective but it is also not neutral; it is harmful because it uses the combination of power and faith to dehumanize and chastise a person due to who they are, how they show up contributing to the world, and for whom they may love. These are factors that never lead to healing, growth, or resilience. They are indicators of exploitation, mistreatment, and psychological abuse.

Transgender children are not more at risk for hardships and mental health concerns because of their gender - they are more at risk due to the treatment they receive in light of their gender through forms of discrimination, dehumanization, rejection, isolation, power imbalances, spiritual abuse, harassment, and lack of protections around their basic rights as humans.

Children who are gender exploring, questioning, transitioning, and transgender are not a threat. Children who are gender diverse, expansive, gay, or asexual are not a threat. The process of identity development is not a threat. All communities deserve environments that offer supportive spaces and places for emerging kids and young adults to discover who they are and how they want to express themselves in the world. Together we must foster solutions that support people to grow up into their

most authentic selves, feeling free, empowered, and embodied with joy in their true selves. This leads to strong families, connective communities, and healthy legacies.

Please pass HB 2458 in support of ending the harmful practice of conversion therapy.