

Submitter: Caitlyn Whitcomb

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

Measure: HB2458

Conversion therapy is a dangerous and abusive practice with documented history of causing extreme harm to those who participate at any age. The use of conversion therapy is already banned for minors in this state; this legislative victory has been applauded by members of the Queer community across the nation. As a State, we have already determined that vulnerable people including youth should not be subjected to this dehumanizing practice—it only makes sense to extend the ban to all residents regardless of age. Furthermore, extreme power imbalances can exist in any community, especially within the conformist groups that have historically relied on abusive practices like conversion “therapy” to coerce members into performing their desired behaviors. With these power imbalances in mind, it makes sense for State legislature to insist that no one, regardless of age, should be subjected to a dubious “treatment” administered by those who seek to exterminate their existence. I use the term “exterminate” intentionally: the practice of conversion therapy is an attempt to destroy the LGBTQIA+ community and assert the myth that queerness is unnatural or even dangerous. This heinous myth has been disproven again and again in qualitative and quantitative studies. We know that Queer people are harmed by oppressive, cis-heterosexist systems and norms embedded in our communities, not by our own existence. There is simply no place for conversion therapy in medical or community-based settings in Oregon and beyond.