

Submitter: Jeremy Jones

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

Measure: HB2458

I am a queer therapist who works primarily to support and provide mental health care for queer and transgender humans and am drafting this letter in support of HB 2458 and of the other providers and proponents of gender-affirming care. There is no empirical evidence demonstrating that conversion therapy is an effective or safe form of intervention for any human. The negative consequences of individuals and organizations pushing the notion that "transgenderism" is a phase or a coping mechanism are either misguided or introducing their own biases into a conversation about the health, equity, and safety of LGBTQ+ youth. Conversation therapy studies demonstrate a significant increase in completed and attempted suicide by youth who identify with the LGBTQ+ community. These communities are already at a higher prevalence rate of suicide due to marginalization, prejudice, and social stigma that are placed on them by others who believe they need to be "fixed" or "cured". There are specific reasons why changes in diagnostic criteria for what qualifies as a mental illness and we have seen the removal of ideas like being gay is a mental illness decades ago with changes in the Diagnostic Statistic Manual. The emergent risks are that the individuals being coerced into this type of "therapy" may not have the option for informed consent or to opt out without risks to safety and stability. With conversion therapy displaying no evidence as an effective treatment modality, it worries me to see other practitioners support the notion of shame, coercion, and aversion which have been listed as concerns by the human rights council. Our ethics have us practice without eliciting harm to the people we are trained to help and for any clinical that opposes this bill and supports the continued practice of conversion therapy or who chooses to delay taking action in hopes that a "better understanding of transgenderism" will lead to new research, then those individuals are allowing queer youth to be victimized, harmed, and perpetually reminded that they are wrong or broken. This bill to prohibit the practice of conversion therapy needs to be enacted to remind humans that they are cared for and valued as they are without cis-heteronormative bigotry impacting public decisions.