

Submitter: Melisa De Seguirant

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

Measure: HB2458

Conversion therapy practices are rooted in transphobia and homophobia. The practice itself assumes a stance, often religious in nature, that deems queerness as a disease or problem to be fixed. This ideology continues to be toxic and harmful to the entire queer population. Conversion therapy practices are targeted at queer youth, and are by-design unethical and harmful in that they use shame as a tool to suppress the development of natural impulses and identities. This has proven to have devastating, even fatal consequences.

Some opposing this measure have noted that we as counselors are responsible for discussing the various approaches to treatment with clients. When doing so, it is true that we avoid imposing our own values, attitudes, beliefs and behaviors in order to uphold the client's self-determination, as indicated by the ethical code below. The treatment modalities being discussed, however, should be research-validated, scientifically proven beneficial, and should not themselves be in violation of any of the other ethical codes, in particular those detailing our responsibilities around avoiding harmful practices.

Others are concerned about the language in the measure being too broad. The fear appears to be that banning conversion therapy would somehow limit the opportunity for therapeutic inquiry around sexual and gender identities in sessions. I do not find the language in the measure to be problematic. "Attempting to change" someone, as the measure states, is the problem, not simply asking questions. The issue is the transphobic and homophobic stance of the clinician, not the open-ended questions around gender and sexuality. As part of my therapeutic practice, I ask my clients to reflect upon their gender and their sexual identities regularly. I have yet to have any of them receive my questioning as a form of "attempting to change" their identity. Clinicians fearful of this response from clients would be wise to do additional work unpacking hidden agendas behind their questioning.

I wholeheartedly support the passage of measure HB2458.

Melisa De Seguirant, MA, LPC, LMFT
Licensed Professional Counselor
Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist

References

American Counseling Association (2014). 2014 ACA code of ethics
<https://www.counseling.org/resources/aca-code-of-ethics.pdf>

A.4.a. Avoiding Harm

A.4.b. Personal Values

A.2.c. Developmental and Cultural Sensitivity

C.5. Nondiscrimination

C.7.a. Scientific Basis for Treatment

C.7.c. Harmful Practices

D.1.a. Different Approaches

E.8. Multicultural Issues/ Diversity in Assessment