

Submitter: Jennifer Yerty LPC

On Behalf Of: All LGBTQQIA2 people

Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

Measure: HB2458

As a mental health therapist in Oregon who works primarily with trauma and LGBTQ+ clients, I see the direct correlation with how identifying as queer and not having that accepted by friends, family, and society leads to trauma symptoms and, too often, death.

As a queer person myself, I feel that even more personally.

I see some of the testimonies on here equating conversion therapy with therapy that allows someone to explore who they are. These could not be more different because therapy, at its core, is about understanding and accepting who we are, and conversion therapy is about the opposite of that.

There is no evidence for the efficacy for conversion therapy in creating well-being in LGBTQ+ people and there is ample evidence of the harm it causes (<https://www.hrc.org/resources/the-lies-and-dangers-of-reparative-therapy>, <https://psychcentral.com/news/conversion-therapy-for-lgbt-kids-linked-to-higher-risks-of-depression-suicide#how-to-support-youth>, <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapediatrics/fullarticle/2789415>). Conversion therapy encourages people to gaslight themselves about their sexuality and identity, to feel intense shame about it, to hide who they are.

Being queer, being trans, isn't a mental illness. It's a part of who we are.

When we are encouraged to hide who we are, this can do nothing but create shame, and a sense that we aren't worthy, aren't good enough as we are. As queer people, we receive that message from society every day, often from family and friends as well, so when we are coming to a professional for help around this and the professional affirms that yes, there is something wrong with us, something we should be ashamed of. . .it's so hard to doubt that. It's so hard to believe in ourselves and our experiences, to see ourselves as good just as we are.

Every person deserves to feel that way. This bill would go further into making that a part of the queer experience as well and affirm that we are okay, we are welcome in a society that often feels very hostile to our existence.

This bill will save the lives of so many Oregonians, especially kids and teens that are at their most alone and vulnerable. I wholeheartedly support the passing of this bill.