

Submitter: Hansa Gutierrez

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

Measure: HB2458

As a licensed mental health professional working with clients of all ages, I oppose HB 2458 because the existing law, ORS 675.850, already prohibits 'conversion therapy' for minors. The language of the law and HB 2458 is vague enough to open the door to prohibiting any therapy that isn't exclusively "gender affirming." In my practice I've spoken to clients and parents that find it difficult to find quality mental health providers who aren't blindly following activist advice to "affirm or your child's life is at risk." Despite having kind hearts and good intentions, many therapists are potentially harming young people by allowing clients to diagnose themselves, as they overlook serious mental health symptoms, traumatic experiences, and uninformed beliefs that can result in life-long medical problems and infertility, as well as short-term exacerbation of symptoms. Our most vulnerable clients (often gay youth and those who have experienced abuse and trauma) are being encouraged to reject their immutable characteristics (sexual orientation and biological sex) in pursuit of an 'identity' that they feel will solve all their problems. We as mental health professionals need to affirm our vow to support our clients' best interests, celebrate diversity, and protect the rights of children to experience childhood and puberty free from unnecessary medicalization.

Sincerely,

Hansa Gutierrez, LMFT

Licensed Marriage & Family Therapist