

Submitter: Sara Goldman

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

Measure: HB2458

I am writing in strong support of HB 2458. There is a moral argument in favor of this bill, but that is not what I am going to write about today. I ask to you instead consider the role of the licensing boards for professional counselors and social health professionals as it pertains to conversion therapy. No professional association (American Psychiatric Association, American Psychology Association, American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry etc) endorses conversion therapy for any person. In fact, these professional associations stand against the harm done by conversion therapy in their position statements. Further, the DSM does not categorize same sex attraction as a disorder.

This bill does not outlaw conversion therapy, but rather prohibit the practice of conversion therapy by certain professionals. I take this to mean if one is an adult, and one wants to be counseled in one's faith community against same sex attraction, that is the individual's prerogative. However a licensed professional cannot provide this therapy. This is right and just. No person's individual liberties are being violated, and the government (and licensing boards) are protecting individuals from the harm done by conversion therapy, by licensed professionals.

By allowing licensed professionals to practice harmful conversion therapy, the licensing boards and the government are endorsing the effectiveness and necessity of such a practice, when not a single professional mental health association does so. Again, this bill does not restrict the ability of an individual to search out conversion therapy, it simply makes it illegal for a person holding a professional license to provide it. Being as there exists not a single data point to support conversion therapy, this seems to be a logical outcome.

I ask you to consider this thought experiment when deciding on your vote: Let us say there was a medical treatment for diabetes that was not endorsed by the AMA. In fact, this treatment had negative outcomes for diabetic people. The American Medical Association had gone so far as to create and endorse a position statement standing against the medical treatment. This treatment was not endorsed in any nationally or internationally recognized journals, nor was it taught in any medical school. Would not the Oregon Medical Board do something to support its mission? "The mission of the Oregon Medical Board is to protect the health, safety, and wellbeing of Oregon citizens by regulating the practice of medicine in a manner that promotes access to quality care."

The mission of the board of licensed professional counselors and therapists is to protect the public by identifying and regulating the practice of counselors and therapists. The social work board mission is the same. Licensed professionals have NO business practicing conversion therapy.

Please vote in support of HB2458.

Thank you,

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