

Submitter: Matt Johnston

On Behalf Of: my clients

Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

Measure: HB2458

My name is Matt Johnston. I am a counselor in Portland, OR. In my work, I have seen the damage that homo- and transphobia has done to my clients. I have had to work much harder with the suicidality of gay and trans clients than I do with clients who are not. In my talks with them, they are often dealing with rejection from family members due to their LGBTQ+ status. Having one more societal institution that views a core part of themselves as something to be cured will make it that much harder.

SOGICE (sexual orientation and gender identity change efforts) also hurt my profession because they are fraudulent. All leading professional medical and mental health associations have rejected "conversion therapy" as a legitimate medical treatment. As a counselor, I often hear stories from clients about the poor decisions of previous counselors. If I'm lucky, it's something like poor boundaries around self-disclosure. If I'm unlucky, it means helping a client report a previous counselor to the Board. I once had to clean up the effects of a counselor who talked about his beliefs against gay marriage in a group of people convicted with driving after drinking. It is always a hassle to clean up after someone else's mess. I dread having to try to undo the damage to the welfare of the clients I serve and my profession by people committing fraud. Counseling is, practically speaking, a peer-regulated profession. People involved in SOGICE are not my peers; I ask legislators to regulate professional involved in SOGICE.

I also think about my friends in the LGBTQ+ community and I want to make sure that my professional community does not contribute to making their lives harder than they are.