

Submitter: Aspen Thomson  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Senate Committee On Human Services  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB989

Hello Chair Gelser Blouin, vice chair Linthicum, and members of the committee,

I am the president of Oregon SAIGE, a local division of the American Counseling Association, but I am writing representing myself as a professional counselor associate in Oregon who has worked with many youths from a variety of backgrounds between my outpatient counseling work and volunteering for the Trevor Project, a queer youth crisis hotline.

I would like to testify in opposition to this bill because I believe it is dangerous in its current form. The vaguely defined “reasonable risk of harm to the child or others” on page 2, line 2-3 could open the door to parents committing their children involuntarily on the basis of the child having an identity their guardians do not agree with, such as gender identity. There is currently a massive push by far-right extremists to conflate trans and nonbinary identities with harm and mental illness. It is no secret that there are providers in Oregon conducting conversion therapy on adults. If the U.S. Supreme Court decides to strike down bans on youth conversion therapy, this bill as written increases the likelihood an Oregonian child is forced into this unscientific and harmful treatment. I appreciate the guardrails this bill employs, of requiring the inpatient programs to be licensed and requiring a neutral fact finder. However, no one is immune to bias, and I believe that “risk of harm” is far too vague of language for a law with such heavy consequences. Please do not support SB 989, at least not without significant revisions.

Thank you,  
Aspen Thomson