

**Hearing for HB 2307 Youth Mental Health Protection Act
February, 23, 2015
Jason Zenobia, 2214 NE 40th Avenue, Portland, OR 97212**

My name is Jason Zenobia and I strongly support House Bill 2307, the Youth Mental Health Protection Act.

When I was 16 years old, living in Lake Oswego, my parents sent me into conversion therapy. I was gay and I couldn't imagine any future for myself. For all I knew, my options were prison or life in a mental hospital or death by violence or AIDS. I was suicidal. My parents were worried for my safety and wanted to find help. The professional therapist they turned to claimed that he could cure gay people and make them straight, as long as they were properly motivated. This was the only hope I could imagine. To make it go away. **But you can't fix something that's not broken.**

I turned even deeper inward, into my own shame and fear. I turned away from my parents, my friends, my brother—everyone who mattered to me. This therapist encouraged me to lie to myself and everyone else. So I did. After a year or so, I just wanted it to stop. I planned my suicide, but I didn't go through with it. So I told him I was cured and he accepted that. Before we parted ways, he brought my parents into one last therapy session where he scolded me for all the pain I had caused my mother and father and instructed me to apologize to them for what I had put them through. It took me years to unravel the damage that this treatment inflicted on my relationship with my family.

The scars are still there. Sometimes I feel angry about it, but, something my father told me years later helped. He said, "You always want your children's lives to be easy. We thought we were helping you. We just didn't realize how much damage we were doing. If we had it to do over again, we never would have done that to you."

Too often, we read in the news about families who never get that second chance. That is why I urge this committee to vote in support of HB 2307, so we protect future generations of families from enduring this kind of pain.

Thank you,
Jason Zenobia
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