

**Hearing for HB 2307 Youth Mental Health Protection Act  
February 23, 2015  
Kate Kauffman, LPC  
TransActive Gender Center, 1631 NE Broadway, 355-T, Portland, OR 97232**

Chair Greenlick and members of the House Committee on Health Care:

My name is Kate Kauffman. I am a Licensed Professional Counselor here in Oregon, and I strongly support House Bill 2307, the Youth Mental Health Protection Act.

I am the Clinical Supervisor and Program Manager for TransActive Gender Center. TransActive Gender Center provides a holistic range of services and expertise to empower transgender and gender diverse children, youth and their families in living healthy lives, free of discrimination.

My work with families of transgender youth and children has shown me both the preventative and positive health outcomes experienced by children when their families support their gender, and the harmful effects when families reject or attempt to suppress children's gender identity. Increased risk for suicide, depression, homelessness, STI's, HIV/AIDS, and substance abuse have all been associated with family rejecting behaviors (Ryan, 2009).

All of us want and need to feel an accepted part of our families. When an important part of a growing youth—like the gender they know themselves to be—is denied by their family, when part of that youth's identity is labeled as "wrong," "bad" or in need of change as is done in conversion therapy, it puts that youth in the untenable position of suppressing one identity (their gender identity) for the sake of the other (their family identity). **I have seen firsthand the suffering, the long-term psychological and emotional turmoil this conflict causes, especially when youth are forced or coerced into conversion therapy.**

Conversely, supportive family actions such as allowing access to information, friendships and appropriate mental and physical health services; seeking accurate information for themselves; and affirming a family member even if they don't yet understand their gender identity, have been associated with significantly higher reports of hope for the future, internal resiliency, and continued family connection (Ryan, 2009). All of these factors, in turn, improve a young person's trajectory towards becoming a happy, healthy adult.

Families who learn that their children are transgender or gender diverse are placed in a difficult situation: they must find a way to support their child, while often having absolutely no idea how to do it. They are highly vulnerable to inaccurate information and therapies, such as conversion therapy, that purport to support their child, while actually creating harm. **Banning conversion therapy for minors will help struggling families find interventions that truly do increase the positive health outcomes of their children, rather than creating additional risks that may have long term negative effects.**

I urge this committee to vote yes on HB 2307, so we can help protect families and children.

Thank you.

Kate Kauffman, LPC

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