



TO: The Oregon House Committee on Health Care
FR: Jeana Frazzini, Executive Director Basic Rights Oregon
DA: Feb 23, 2015
RE: Testimony in Support of HB 2307

Chair Greenlick and members of the committee, my name is Jeana Frazzini and I serve as Executive Director of Basic Rights Oregon. I am pleased to bring forward HB 2307, the Youth Mental Health Protection Act on behalf of our constituents all across the state. Basic Rights Oregon works to ensure that all lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Oregonians experience equality and we believe that this legislation is a clear and tangible step to ensuring our state is one that prioritizes the safety and affirmation of our youth, particularly our LGBTQ youth.

As the organizational sponsor of this bill we strongly urge your support for HB 2307, which will ensure that licensed professional health care providers do not subject Oregon youth to harmful conversion therapy. Conversion Therapy includes a range of dangerous and discredited practices aimed at changing a person's sexual orientation or suppressing a person's gender identity or expression.

Thank you to each and every member of this committee for meeting with us this past week about this bill and asking such thoughtful questions. We have worked hard to address your questions and you will hear answers to them today from a broad set of experts and individuals impacted by conversion therapy.

We believe that every LGBT child is born perfect and that any young person's identity as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender should be honored, celebrated and supported. Conversion therapy practices are based on the false claim that being lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) is a mental illness that can and should be cured. Every leading health and mental health professional association in this country has rejected the view that being LGBT is a mental illness and has deemed conversion therapy "treatment" as ineffective and harmful.

Unfortunately, current Oregon law does not protect young people from being coerced and subjected to these harmful practices, which puts youth at serious risk for depression, decreased self-esteem, substance abuse and suicide.

Some people wonder if this bill is needed and if this practice persists. There are so many stories of members of our community who have been harmed by conversion therapy. We are here to ensure their voices are heard and that these harmful practices stop. We are here for folks like Laurie Warren from Gold Hill, Oregon in Jackson County who shared her

story in a letter to you. Laurie placed her trust in a licensed counselor who claimed that he could help her become straight. After two years and 10 percent of her monthly income as a teacher, she was humiliated. The therapy caused her great emotional strain and trauma. Laurie's story and so many others are heart wrenching and preventable.

One question that has been raised is whether or not this legislation may have any unintended consequences. It is an important question and one we take seriously. This legislation is carefully drafted to clearly and narrowly define these dangerous and discredited practices. Conversion therapy does not include therapies that provide support or acceptance of LGBT identities, therapy that facilitates social support or identity exploration, or therapy that addresses unlawful conduct or unsafe sexual practices. Oregon youth and families have a right to expect that a therapist practicing under a license from the state will not put them at risk of severe harm, including depression, substance abuse and suicide.

Consider that suicide is the second leading cause of death for youth between the ages of 10 and 24 years of age. Lesbian, gay and bisexual youth are four times more likely to attempt suicide as their straight peers. We must do everything we possibly can as a state to prevent the loss of even one child.

Passing HB 2307 is one major step in that direction.

Thank you.