



TO: The Oregon House Health Care Committee
FR: Larry Conner MA LPC, ORCA Public Policy and Advocacy Chair
DA: Feb 20, 2015
RE: Support for HB 2307

Chair Greenlick and Members of the Committee:

The Oregon Counseling Association (ORCA) represents Licensed Professional Counselors (LPCs) across Oregon. **I am writing today as the Public Policy and Advocacy Chair of ORCA in support of HB 2307, which prohibits mental health professionals from providing conversion therapy to minor clients.**

Licensed Professional Counselors are highly trained Masters level mental health providers who offer psychotherapy services to individuals of all ages, families, couples, groups, and organizations throughout Oregon in mental health clinics, private practices, colleges, hospitals, prisons, and rehabilitation agencies.

The American Counseling Association, our parent organization, has issued a statement defining its opposition to conversion therapy for young persons because it presupposes same-sex orientation is a form of mental illness that needs to be corrected, something that has been discounted for many decades by all mental health provider organizations. The Oregon Counseling Association is in full support of this position.

The problem we have with conversion therapy for those under 18 is that, at a time when a young person is most vulnerable to influence from others, adults attempting to manipulate his/her sexual identity can create enormous suffering in the young person. The confusion and self-doubt such treatment engenders can lead to severe anxiety, depression, and suicide.

One of the major goals of counseling is to help a young person learn skills of self-awareness, self-acceptance and inner cohesion. To provide counseling services that create interpersonal division and conflict, in order to serve external forces in society, is both destructive and unethical.

We therefore ask you to vote in support of HB 2307. By supporting this bill, you will help create safety for the young people in Oregon who are struggling with a very difficult question and who need our help and support, not judgment and harsh treatment.

Thank you for this opportunity to write in support of HB 2307, I ask your support for the bill and hope you will send it to the House Floor.