

To: Senate Committee on Human Services and Early Childhood
From: Laurie Warren, 780 Birdseye Creek Rd, Gold Hill, OR 97525
Re: Hearing for HB 2307 Youth Mental Health Protection Act
Date: April 28, 2015

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

I struggled with my sexuality since I was a teenager, and I became a born again Christian at the age of 18. While I hoped it would make things clearer, for me, being born again only served to suppress my truth and increase my inner conflict. When I entered college, my inner conflict grew when I fell in love with a woman for the first time in my life, however, my love interest was also a born again Christian, which required me to keep my feelings about her to myself. For several years after that, I behaved as a heterosexual young woman, trying to force myself into that role by engaging in meaningless encounters with a variety of men.

Years later, when I again had feelings for a member of my own gender, I was mortified and consulted my pastor. He counseled me not to give in to my feelings and to start seeing a Christian counselor right away. My counselor was a licensed therapist and I worked with him for two years, spending about 10 percent of my hard-earned income to try to become straight. After those two years of work, my counselor suggested that he and the members of his church would fast and pray on my behalf, and they did so for six weeks or so. When he felt the time was right, they had me come to their church for a session that had all the makings of an exorcism. And I felt nothing change. It was embarrassing, and I felt totally humiliated. When I went for my next counseling session, I explained that I'd felt no changes at all. My therapist told me there was nothing more he could do for me.

Today, I'm still living with my partner of 20 years, although our relationship is over. We have only one neighbor within sight, as we live on a rural property. He still calls us "queers" and is decidedly unfriendly. I am now cautiously open and honest with some people about my orientation, and have involved myself in outside activities that do not include my partner. I don't think I will ever feel completely comfortable identifying as a lesbian.

No one, especially a young person, should have to go through what I went through—particularly with a licensed counselor. I strongly urge you to pass House Bill 2307, the Youth Mental Health Protection Act.

Sincerely,
Laurie Warren
780 Birdseye Creek Rd, Gold Hill, OR 97525