

**To: Senate Committee on Human Services and Early Childhood**  
**From: Maxwell Hirsh, 18154 Siena Drive, Lake Oswego, OR 97034**  
**Re: HB 2307 Youth Mental Health Protection Act**  
**Date: April 28, 2015**

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

In 2011, at the age of 21, I began seeing a licensed psychiatrist in Portland to work on what I thought was depression as well as some of the difficulties I had around coming out. I explained to him that I was gay and was ok with this. He, however, insisted I was straight.

Through many sessions he continued to argue that I was straight, or that my sexual orientation was caused by things like having an overbearing mother and distant father, being bad at sports, having previous bad experiences with women, or having negative experiences with men.

I kept going because I felt pressured to. My parents had a hard time accepting my sexual orientation and I was worried I might be kicked out of the house if I stopped. The psychiatrist would also back away from his ideas when I challenged him, only to bring them up again later on. He also never used the label "conversion therapy" to describe what he did. I stopped attending sessions when he admitted that he was trained in talk therapy in New York by someone who practiced something like conversion therapy.

This process was mentally draining. It was distressing to have experienced that level of homophobia from someone who should have known better. It made me feel more depressed, anxious and insecure about my relationships. I also think that this level of misinformation coming from a mental health professional delayed my family's acceptance of my orientation. This therapy also wasted time and energy I could have used to find more legitimate and helpful resources.

Additionally, this was paid for through my health insurance, which is usually only meant to go towards legitimate treatments. I do not think the psychiatrist was open with them about his particular approach to therapy.

Once I felt recovered enough, I decided it was important to file a complaint so that other LGBT people would not have to experience the same thing.

I first got in touch with the Oregon Medical Board. I explained that what I was experienced seemed like conversion therapy. I also provided policy statements from the American Psychiatric Association that they opposed sexual orientation change efforts. They replied that since no Oregon law had been violated they would not take any action. They would however keep a record of my complaint in the doctor's file for future reference.

Next I contacted the Southern Poverty Law Center, since it was working on conversion therapy cases around the U.S. Together, we filed a complaint against this psychiatrist with the Oregon Psychiatric Association. We also went public with my experience to raise awareness about this issue in Oregon and across the country. The OPA decided to investigate. I was pleased with the result that included professional training for the psychiatrist and profession-wide training at the OPA's next conference. I hope that the conference was productive and it is great that they recognized there is a systemic problem in understanding LGBT issues within psychiatry. I still find it worrying though that I was pressured by a psychiatrist to identify as heterosexual nearly 25 years after homosexuality was entirely removed from the DSM.

I think that there are licensed mental health professionals in Oregon who will continue to practice this therapy despite the professional guidelines against it. Dealing with this was very difficult. I firmly believe that a law should be put in place to protect LGBT Oregonians under the age of 18 from attempts by licensed mental health professionals to change their sexual orientation or gender identity.

I urge this committee to vote in support of HB 2307, so we protect future generations.