



To: Senate Committee on Human Services and Early Childhood
From: Nico Quintana, Policy Director, Basic Rights Oregon
Re: Hearing for HB 2307 Youth Mental Health Protection Act
Date: April 28, 2015

My name is Nico Quintana and I am the Policy Director for Basic Rights Oregon. I want to extend my deep support for House Bill 2307, the Youth Mental Health Protection Act.

I support HB 2307 because it will have a lifesaving impact on Lesbian, Gay Bisexual and Transgender youth in Oregon. This bill will protect LGBT youth from harmful practices of conversion therapy, which aims to change sexual orientation, gender identity or expression of LGBT youth. These harmful practices use rejection, shame, and psychological abuse to force young people to try and change who they are. These practices are known to be extremely dangerous and can lead to depression, decreased self-esteem, substance abuse and even suicide.

Despite the progress we've made, devastating rates of violence and discrimination still exist in Oregon, particularly for transgender youth and LGBT youth of color, leading to higher rates of health disparities and early mortality and morbidity. Eighty-three percent of transgender Oregonians experience harassment or discrimination on the job, 23 percent has experienced homelessness and 40 percent have reported a history of suicide attempts. Additionally, LGBT people of color experience higher rates of poverty, harassment and discrimination and negative life outcomes across the board.

In 2014 alone, I lost four transgender friends and colleagues --one committed suicide, one was murdered in a hate crime and two died of health issues. The youngest was 22 years of age.

We need only look to the national headlines to be reminded how conversion therapy is claiming the lives of our community members. On December 28, 2014, Leelah Alcorn, a 17 year old transgender girl from Ohio, took her own life after being subjected to conversion therapy in Ohio. In her note to her friends she spoke to her hope that "one day transgender people aren't treated the way I was, they're treated like humans, with valid feelings and human rights. It grieves me that youth like Leelah are still being subjected to the discredited and harmful practice of conversion therapy

Oregon is a leader on LGBT issues and we are asking you, our state leaders, to once again demonstrate that the lives of LGBT Oregonians are important. I urge you to support HB 2307 and ban conversion therapy for minors in Oregon by licensed providers. Consider the consequences that not acting will have on the lives of the thousands of LGBT youth in Oregon.

Nico Quintana
Policy Director
Basic Rights Oregon