



**TO: Senate Committee on Human Services and Early Childhood**  
**FR: Jeana Frazzini, Co-Director Basic Rights Oregon**  
**DA: April 28, 2015**  
**RE: Testimony in Support of HB 2307**

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Chair Gelser and Members of the Committee,

My name is Jeana Frazzini and I serve as Co-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.

We believe that every LGBTQ 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.

Voices like Maxwell Hirsh of Lake Oswego who submitted a letter to you. In 2011, at the age of 21, he began seeing a licensed psychiatrist in Portland to work on what he thought was depression as well as some of the difficulties he had around coming out. He explained to him that he was gay and was ok with this. The psychiatrist, however, insisted he was straight. After weeks of sessions that were humiliating and frustrating, he stopped seeing this therapist. He went through a draining process to file a complaint with the state, which did nothing but file it. Eventually he was able to get the Oregon Psychiatric Association to investigate, which ordered retraining. He said: "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."

A ban would provide clear guidance to therapists, parents and clients that these kinds of conversion practices are not allowed in Oregon.

One question that has been raised is whether or not this legislation would affect a person's religious freedom. It does not. This bill only addresses therapy or counseling with licensed mental health professionals. Individuals seeking spiritual counseling will continue to have the opportunity to consult their faith community as they currently do.

Finally, you may recall that President Obama announced his support for a ban on conversion therapy following the tragic suicide of transgender teen Leelah Alcorn. 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.