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Senator Sara Gelser, Chair
Senate Committee on Human Services and Early Childhood
900 Court St. N.E.
Salem, OR 97301

RE: HB 2307

Dear Senator Gelser,

I am a retired faculty member in the Oregon State University Counselor Education Program. I am also a Past President and Fellow of the American Counseling Association (ACA). I wish to add my strong support to passage of HB 2307 and would be willing to provide personal testimony to the Senate Committee at your next meeting.

I completed graduate degrees at the University of Kansas and my counseling psychology degree from the University of Missouri-Columbia. I have worked as a school counselor, a counselor educator at Wichita State University and Oregon State University. Following my retirement I let my license as a professional counselor expire; however, I remain an active member of ACA and participate in several activities within that organization—most recently being an invited guest at the 2015 “Time to Thrive” conference held in Portland, Oregon in February. That excellent conference provided many resources for working with GLBTQQI youth.

In the 1960s, as a graduate student in my counseling psychology program, with many other students, we studied the status of homosexuality issues as they were understood at that time. Homosexuality was considered an illness in that decade and there were a few psychological studies to determine the effectiveness of conversion therapy on individuals (also called aversive conditioning and reparative therapy).

In the next two decades, the body of knowledge and evidence related to the study of homosexuality grew and emerged later with a declaration by the American Psychological Association and the American Psychiatric Association plus related professional associations dealing with counseling and psychotherapy, that homosexuality was not an illness. This was formalized in an edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM). Subsequently, professional associations moved steadily to declare conversion “therapy” an inappropriate methodology. In fact, professionals would declare that it is not a “therapy.”

Professional associations sometimes move more slowly than we would like, but they do move. Homosexuality is now not considered an illness. Conversion therapy is considered inappropriate and is certainly not something to be practiced on minor children.

Most counselor education and psychologist education programs today would include readings, discussions, and attention to the many aspects of homosexuality, gender identity, sexual orientation, and related appropriate therapeutic methodologies. Contemporary counselors and psychologists do not enter the practice arena uninformed.

The written testimony you have received on this bill includes an excellent statement by Richard Yep, the Executive Director of the American Counseling Association on why HB 2307 should be passed. As a long-time member of the American Counseling Association, I concur with Mr. Yep's summary of the ACA position on this issue.

On a personal note, I recall my own experience many years ago as a new school counselor from a preparation program which had no mention of the word *homosexuality* other than the assumption that it was something wrong. The young man who sought my counsel related to his pervasive questions about his own sexuality was poorly served by my uninformed response. To this day, I have wondered what happened to him and I still would like to be able to reach out to him in apology for my ignorant response. In this day, even a new counselor would emerge from a preparation program having had an opportunity to read, study, discuss, and practice various approaches to issues and questions about the common questions that young people have about issues of sexuality, gender identity, and sexual orientation.

Conversion "therapy" should not be practiced—especially among minors (18 or under). Passage of HB 2307 will be of great assistance to the generations of young people who will continue to grow and to ask questions which are difficult for many to answer.

Respectfully submitted,



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