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Today we write in support of HB 2307, the *Youth Mental Health Protection Act* as parents of an LGBTQ youth, as opposed to our regular role of a former Legislator and a child advocate.

Four years ago when our son was 16, he let us know he was gay. We immediately began to think about how and where we could seek support for him as he navigated this challenging road as a young person. As a family of faith, we knew his path was further complicated by the mixed messages from the faith community he grew up in. His prior history of anxiety issues had made us familiar with treatment options to support his mental health but we were in a very different situation as we sought a mental health provider who could help make sense of the difficult issues our son was facing.

As parents, our only wish was to find a mental health provider that we could trust to support and encourage our son while he dealt with the confusion of emotions, social pressures and internal anxiety that was paramount during this time in his life. We wanted him to know at every level that he was loved, accepted and valued for who he was and who God made him to be.

In researching and seeking a mental health provider, we became increasingly concerned about the possibility of inadvertently introducing our son to a professional who would try to change our son's orientation or in some way undermine the message of acceptance that we were encouraging him to hear. Without knowledge of what was being said in a counselor's office, we knew we had little protection against the dangerous and damaging practice of "conversion therapy." We made every effort to ensure the provider we used was supportive and our son's mental health and his whole self but there was no legal recourse or protection for us or our son from this modality of therapy.

We ask you to protect all of Oregon's LGBTQ youth as they seek professional support from licensed mental health providers in the state. Please pass HB2307 to ensure our youth are safe from the worst kind of betrayal during their time of need.

Sincerely,

Dave and Tonia Hunt