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Sent: Tuesday, April 28, 2015 5:00 PM
To: Ross Cheyenne
Subject: Written testimony on behalf of HB2307

4/28/15

Chair Gelser, Vice Chair Olsen and Members of the Senate Committee on Human Services and Early Childhood;

I am submitting this written testimony on behalf of HB 2307 both as Chair and representative of the LGBT Caucus of the Democratic Party of Oregon and as a member of the LGBT community

I regret that due to my work schedule, I was unable to make today's hearing in person.

I write to carry on the efforts of my predecessors in the DPO LGBT Caucus, who in 2012 began the work to expose Conversion therapy as the harmful practice it is, and advocate for its ban. I enthusiastically support all the members of this multi-partisan coalition that advocate passage of HB 2307, the health care providers that can attest to the dangers of conversion therapy, and I especially support the members of my LGBT Community who have experienced the rejection and stigmatization that is the foundational basis for the practice of conversion therapy.

I did not testify when the House Committee held its hearing on HB 2307 over a month ago. I believed that it was more appropriate for the House members to hear directly from the health care advocates and my courageous brothers and sisters who are survivors of conversion therapy.

But after much thought, I came to the realization that my history of familial rejection is a worthy story that gives maybe just a tiny bit more background for the decision you are to make.

It wasn't until I was in my early 20's that I came out to my parents. My mother's initial reaction was whole-hearted rejection, and the biting clichés she used could have been taken from the Shocked-and-Appalled parent's guide book. She both lamented at what she may have "done wrong" at the same time she chastised me and bemoaned "How, **HOW**, could you do this to us?!" 1600 miles apart both physically and emotionally, I pretty much shrugged and moved on.

Only a few years later, on her deathbed, she seemed to come around in her own guarded way. She told me "You're ok, kid." To this day, I carry with me both her eventual acceptance

and her initial rejection. Even as a young adult, far removed from disconnected parents, that familial rejection was impactful and is lasting.

A great majority of LGBT folks have experienced familial rejection. "Coming out" stories are a patchwork of little and large rejection vignettes. The slow arc of change will not erase our memories or our pain, but in a defined yet grand way, the passage of HB 2307 will itself be a part of the patchwork of acceptance that ever so slightly moves Oregon to the better paradigm that recognizes gay people are indeed ok.

And on a very specific level, banning conversion therapy will have a very real result that will remain unknown. LGBT kids, if rejected by their family are upwards of 800% more prone to attempt suicide. Banning the practice of conversion therapy may well keep that unknown kid, fragile and precariously balancing on the edge of suicide, from becoming another data point in this tragic statistic.

Please vote for the passage of HB 2307.

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