

My name is Greg Peterson, I am a licensed professional counselor with over ten years of experience, and I am the Director of Student Wellness at the University of Portland. I am a counselor educator who has been teaching in master's programs nationally since 2016. I have served as the Oregon Counseling Association Ethics Committee Chair and currently as the President-Elect.

The practice of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Change Efforts (SOGICE) is unethical and harmful to all people, youth and adults. Currently, ORS 675.850 protects clients from SOGICE who are under the age of 18 and needs to be expanded to prevent adults from accessing this harmful modality. This bill will lead the nation to ban SOGICE as an unaccepted practice, which is clinically proven harmful to individuals who receive this disproven method. Green et al. (2018), in their article "Self-Reported Conversion Efforts and Suicidality Among US LGBTQ Youths and Young adults" provides substantive evidence reported from individuals that underwent SOGICE of the direct harm this method causes. Participants in the study who identified as LGBTQ+ who underwent SOGICE were more than twice as likely to attempt suicide than those who did not. These troubling findings are further distressing by Forsythe et al.'s (2022) report "Humanistic and Economic Burden of Conversion Therapy Among LGBTQ Youths in the United States" which discusses the results of LGBTQ+ youth who received SOGICE experiencing increased rates of psychological distress (+13%), depression (+38%), substance use (+17%), and attempted suicide (+19%). The evidence is clear within mental health and public health research that SOGICE causes harm.

Counselors in the state of Oregon are required to adhere to the American Counseling Association 2014 Code of Ethics. The Code of Ethics states in section C on Professional Responsibility, section 7 Treatment Modalities, subsection a. Scientific Basis for Treatment "When providing services, counselors use techniques/procedures/modalities that are grounded in theory and/or have an empirical or scientific foundation" (ACA, 2014, C.7.a.). SOGICE has been proven harmful to teens and young adults, and the likelihood of its harm to adults is high. Due to the legal requirement of licensed professional counselors to adhere to the Code of Ethics, and other helping professions have similar requirements here in Oregon, SOGICE should not be provided by any counselor in the state. This transitive ban is not enough. SOGICE were developed from a place of trans and homophobia and is by its very nature discriminatory. The counseling profession, through its Code of Ethics in section C professional responsibility subsection 5 Nondiscrimination are tasked that "Counselors do not condone or engage in discrimination against prospective or current clients, students, employees, supervisees, or research participants based on age, culture, disability, ethnicity, race, religion/spirituality, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, marital/partnership status, language preference, socioeconomic status, immigration status, or any basis proscribed by law."

I ask the Oregon State House of Representatives to hear this testimony that the counseling profession adheres to a Code of Ethics, which identifies that we do not discriminate. The code of ethics identifies that counselors practice helpful and evidence-based methods. As a counselor, I ask that you pass this bill to ban the use of SOGICE as a harmful practice so that no mental health provider can offer SOGICE as a modality due to the harm it causes to the LGBTQ+ community and the greater community.