

Submitter: Eden Catalan

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

Measure: HB2458

To whom it may concern,

I am a lesbian from a small city west of Portland. I have known I am a lesbian before I even knew the word existed. I have known my love for other women is not something to be ashamed of. It is just as beautiful and valid as the love a man and a woman share. I am lucky to have grown up with parents who accepted me for who I am. I am lucky to have grown up in a beautiful city with people who supported my identity. I am especially lucky to have grown up in Oregon. I know for many people, they do not have supportive families.

Conversion therapy has been used as a tool to harm my community and teaches people that our identities are undesirable. Conversion therapy teaches us that being queer is a "choice" one makes out of spontaneity and that you can change. This is not true. It will never ever be true. Being queer is something I am proud of, but it is not something that is easy.

When I go to the farmer's market with my girlfriend, we are constantly gawked at. Whenever we go somewhere to enjoy a meal together, we are stared. When I talk to someone, I have to decide how they will react once they know I am gay.

Nevertheless, I am proud of who I am. I love my girlfriend. I love my community of queer siblings. I love this state.

This decision is more important than ever because of the current attack on my trans siblings. I know people who fear for their ability to get the care they need. I know people who fear they will have to flee the country. I have so many trans friends that I love with all my heart who need to be protected from the alt right's misinformation.

Anti-trans legislation has affected my friends, family, and community and has caused so much anxiety. My community needs your help. We need to set an example for the country that Oregon will remain a safe space for queer people to thrive. We need you to listen to our voices.

I hope that my words may sway some of you to vote in favour of this bill. I hope that my words will continue to live with you. After all, it is my lived experience and the lived experiences of so many queer people in the community. I only touched the tip of the iceberg but I hope you take into account what my community needs.

Thank you.