

My name is Larry Conner. I have been practicing as a Licensed Professional Counselor for 35 years. In those years I have encountered several men who suffered from Conversion Therapy in their early 20s. In each case the Conversion Therapy failed to make the men heterosexual and yet created a deep divide in the person that left them in severe doubt about themselves years later. In each case there was an internal conflict that was deep and destructive. Conversion Therapy does not serve mental or spiritual health.

For years I have been concerned about young persons attending religious colleges who feel substantial pressure to conform to the normative sexual identity they assume they must take on in order to feel acceptable. Even though they are older than 18, they are still vulnerable to family and social pressure to conform to something that is not true for them. The pressure on them can be enormous.

The problem with Conversion Therapy is that it imposes a false identity on someone that is not an authentic expression of their deepest self. Conversion therapy is driven by religious and societal norms that do not take the truest nature of the self into account. The manipulations and shaming associated with conversion therapy create damage that lasts long into adulthood, perhaps even to the point of old age and death. To me, that is tragic.

The American Psychological Association and the American Counseling Association both agree that Conversion Therapy is both ineffective and abusive and thus should not be allowed to be performed on anyone.

Please pass HB 2458.