

Submitter: Penelope Hummel

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

Measure: HB2458

Dear Oregon Legislators,

As a longtime Oregonian, I am writing to you today in opposition to HB2458, which would extend a ban against so-called “conversion therapy” from minors (as currently written) to people of all ages. Although I am a lifelong Democrat, I see this bill as far from progressive.

Please take a close look at what this bill is asking you to do. Therapists are professionals who have been trained to help people to examine reasons for mental distress. They do this by gently probing, asking questions, helping their clients get to the root causes of their discomfort or mental anguish. They are not supposed to impose a viewpoint on their patients, nor are they supposed to blindly affirm a patient's self-diagnosis. Why should gender dysphoria be treated differently than every other condition? Why is this the one condition that therapists should not question but accept as an untouchable revelation of an internal, unchangeable reality?

Gender dysphoria is a real condition, and it can be seriously painful and disrupting to normal life. A wide range of other factors can contribute to it, including sexual abuse, autism, anxiety, depression, and same-sex attraction. Gender activists will say that the gender dysphoria is what causes these conditions, but evidence shows that the reverse is true.

Under the previous protocol of watchful waiting and exploratory therapy, many people's gender dysphoria resolves, as they deal with its underlying causes, in many cases coming to accept themselves as gay. Unfortunately, the reprehensible and discredited past therapeutic practice of trying to force gay people to become straight (what truly can be called “conversion therapy”) is being confused with truly helping people with gender dysphoria.

It is the job of ethical therapists to follow best practices and help their patients explore all of their mental distress, without any ideological commitment determining the outcome. Please allow therapists to do this critical work. Please vote "no" on HB 2458.