

Submitter: Lily Brooks  
On Behalf Of: Reality  
Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care  
Measure: HB2458

I am a former teacher, social worker and child advocate. I am also a parent. A lifelong liberal, I affirm gay/lesbian/bi identities and would never support "conversion therapy." The legislature's new definition of "conversion therapy" astonishes me—when did helping clients explore their beliefs and motivations become conversion therapy? Isn't exploring your beliefs and motivations the definition of therapy? We grow and learn through having our beliefs challenged: "Why do we think what we think? How did we come to believe what we believe? What other possibilities exist? How might we work with feelings of discomfort? Where might our thinking be flawed?" This is the work of therapists, and to do otherwise unethically changes the role of a therapist from challenger to cheerleader. It astonishes me that our state legislature, without any evidence that therapists are even practicing "conversion therapy," has already chosen to restrict those in the helping professions from properly serving gender distressed youth through ORS 675.850. It astonishes me even more that you now propose to further hobble their ability to assist those struggling with gender distress through HB 2458.

It is important to make a firm distinction between LGB identities, and transgender identities. LGB people simply seek to be accepted for who they are. Those who are gender confused and believe themselves to be Trans seek to be accepted for what they are not. Humans cannot change biological sex. Mimicking the other sex through clothing, names, pronouns, or even more extreme, through cross sex hormones and surgeries, does not change reality. Women are xx. Men are xy. A therapist is there to help us change our minds, not alter our bodies. To ban therapists from encouraging clients to think deeply before they take steps that result in permanent physical changes like sterility, and a lifetime as a medical patient, is to redefine the entire profession and remove the ethical and moral underpinnings that have informed therapeutic practice.

We do not ask therapists to "affirm" anorexic or bulimic people, who suffer with extreme distortions regarding body acceptance. We do not ask therapists to "affirm" suicidal people, those who practice self-harm, or people who suffer any kind of delusion. The affirmation-only model is unprecedented and just plain wrong. Only 3 days ago, Jamie Reed, a former case manager-turned-whistleblower at the Transgender Center at St Louis Hospital, came forward to say: "By the time I departed, I was certain that the way the American medical system is treating these patients is the opposite of the promise we make to "do no harm." Instead, we are permanently harming the vulnerable patients in our care." She stated: "To begin transitioning, the girls needed a letter of support from a therapist—usually one we

recommended—who they had to see only once or twice for the green light. The next stop was a single visit to the endocrinologist for a testosterone prescription. That's all it took. ...after working at the center, I came to believe that teenagers are simply not capable of fully grasping what it means to make the decision to become infertile while still a minor."

Legislators, take note: the role of a therapist here was key in pushing these children towards extreme medical interventions. Now there is a federal investigation. This will be the first of many whistleblowers, the first of many investigations into malpractice. Unfortunately, those who have already been through the system- the system you enforced- are now permanently damaged and many are filled with regret and outrage at what was done to their bodies. The voices of detransitioners must be listened to and taken seriously: they needed help from therapists, but not the kind of help they got.

This bill just makes an already bad law, worse. Let therapists do their jobs.