



TO: House Committee on Behavioral Health and Healthcare
FROM: Seth Johnstone, Transgender Justice Program Manager, Basic Rights Oregon
DATE: 2/14/2023
RE: Support for HB 2458

Chair Nosse, Vice-Chairs Goodwin and Nelson, and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony to the committee today. I'm Seth Johnstone, I use he/him pronouns, and I'm the Transgender Justice Program Manager for Basic Rights Oregon. I'm here today to urge you to advance HB 2458.

We know from countless studies and heart-breaking personal stories that conversion therapy not only fails to achieve its stated goal, but also causes immense shame and pain for the LGBTQ+ people who endure it.

The data is clear, which is why the American Medical Association, American Psychiatric Association, National Association of Social Workers, and countless other respected expert organizations advise against conversion therapy.

Oregon, along with 24 other states, already bans conversion therapy for children. HB 2485 would extend that ban by prohibiting any licensed counselor from practicing conversion therapy on adults as well.

Basic Rights Oregon supports this bill, because we believe all LGBTQ+ Oregonians deserve to be affirmed for who they are. The job of behavioral health professionals should be to empower people to be themselves, rather than invoking more trauma and shame into their lives.

Conversion therapy should not exist in a state which purports to respect the freedom of all people to be who they are and love who they love—and we know Oregonians hold those values dearly.

We understand some adults may want to seek out conversion therapy. But it is the job of licensed therapists to first do no harm to their patients, and conversion therapy is indisputably harmful. According to UCLA's Williams Institute, over 700,000 LGBTQ+ people have been subjected to conversion therapy in their lives—and they are about twice as likely to consider and attempt suicide than people who haven't had conversion therapy.

I'm proud to be submitting this today as a transgender man, and I'm grateful that I was never subjected to attempts to change who I truly am by a counselor, someone I should be able to trust. All other LGBTQ+ Oregonians deserve the same.

Please advance this live-saving legislation. Thank you.