

Submitter: Christopher Brehm

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

Measure: HB2458

Conversion "therapies" (practices rather) should indeed be banned but the language and scope of HB 2458 should be modified before the legislation is passed: Sexual orientation and gender identity should not be lumped together.

Numerous research studies and untold hours of clinical experience have shown that in the vast majority of cases, Sexual Orientation Change Efforts (SOCE) such as "conversion therapy" or "reparative therapy" that attempt to change someone's sexual orientation (specifically to a heterosexual orientation) are harmful. Such practices are already regarded as unethical by most professional organizations within the medical and mental health fields.

However, gender identity is different from sexual orientation and should be separated out from this legislation. Issues of gender identity in health care, which may include gender dysphoria, often have complex underpinnings associated with an individual's developmental history, historical or current mental health conditions, neurodiversity status, trauma history, perception of and relationship to their body, and social identity formation. Issues with gender identity can even be connected to internalized homophobia or misogyny, and in the case of women and girls who are currently raising gender identity questions at much higher rates, may be connected to the difficulties and vulnerabilities of living in a female body within our often oppressive society. Health care practitioners should be encouraged and empowered to help their patients or clients explore these complex dynamics using proven, agenda-neutral interventions.

I urge you to separate out these two distinct issues, sexual orientation and gender identity, before passing HB 2458 or similar legislation.