

Submitter: Katelyn Cavanagh

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

Measure: HB2458

I am a mental health researcher with a master's degree in psychology. I am also pursuing my doctorate in clinical psychology, and I have work experience within the child welfare system. I am writing to end conversion therapy's inherently abusive and harmful practice. This practice shouldn't be allowed to continue anywhere, in any capacity. This bill is a start.

Queer people who have gone through conversion therapy are almost twice as likely to attempt suicide and face a 92% greater risk of experiencing lifetime suicidal ideation than those who have not undergone conversion therapy (thisisloyal.com, 2020). Trans people who have been subjected to conversion therapy show a 55% increase in the likelihood of attempting suicide (Campbell & van der Meulen Rodgers, 2022).

Conversion therapy is not a legitimate form of mental health therapy or support. It is a harmful and dangerous practice masquerading as "help." It operates on incorrect and unfounded beliefs that being Queer or Trans is 1. Wrong 2. A behavior 3. Curable. (HRC FOUNDATION, n.d.). The goal of conversion therapy is to change someone's sexuality or gender into being straight or cis, often using whatever means necessary to get the person to suppress who they are to be seen as "correct" again. This dangerous practice occurs in both professional and faith settings but predominately is performed in conservative religious settings (Stonewall Org, 2022).

These practices aren't effective; people's sexuality and gender is not a behavior that can be changed. "In 2012, the Pan American Health Organization noted that 'conversion therapies' had no medical justification and represented a severe threat to the health and human rights of victims, and in 2016, the World Psychiatric Association found that "there is no sound scientific evidence that innate sexual orientation can be changed." In 2020, the Independent Forensic Expert Group declared that offering 'conversion therapy' is a form of deception, false advertising, and fraud." (Madrigal-Borloz, 2020).

Conversion therapy techniques include: misusing and misrepresenting talk therapy, corrective rape, misuse of electroconvulsive therapy, aversive therapy, forced confinement, and isolation, forced behavioral corrections, physical abuse, verbal abuse, sexual abuse, exorcisms and ritualistic cleansing, and threats (Alempijevic et al., 2020).

Conversion therapy survivors are 5.9X more likely to report high levels of depression and 3.4x more likely to use substances (GLAAD, 2018). Experiencing conversion

therapy also more than doubles the risk of trans youth running away (Campbell & van der Meulen Rodgers, 2022). Conversion therapy also often causes PTSD (Alempijevic et al., 2020).

Conversion therapy is torture for torture's sake. It is purely harmful with no benefits. It needs to end.