

Submitter: K K

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

Measure: HB2458

I'm a queer therapist living in Portland and I support this bill. It is 2023 and it is time for certain religious institutions to stop imposing their hate and intolerance on vulnerable people. The proposed bill aims to ban conversion therapy for adults (it is already banned for minors) and puts it into law that mental health therapists should not be allowed to try to convince clients questioning their sexual orientation, gender identity/expression to subscribe to heterosexual, cisgender norms.

There are many vulnerable adults in Oregon trying to find their identity and they need to know that, without a doubt, there is nothing wrong with not identifying with your assigned gender and you have the right to love anyone your heart desires (of legal age, of course). In addition, religious individuals seem to forget the fact that intersex people exist, which is defined below:

"There are many different ways someone can be intersex. Some intersex people have genitals or internal sex organs that fall outside the male/female categories — such as a person with both ovarian and testicular tissues. Other intersex people have combinations of chromosomes that are different than XY (usually associated with male) and XX (usually associated with female), like XXY. And some people are born with external genitals that fall into the typical male/female categories, but their internal organs or hormones don't."

This small paragraph from Planned Parenthood's website does not fully explain the nuance of intersex individuals. But it is important to note that these individuals could have features affected by their hormones, causing individuals to appear more feminine but have testes and gonads. Or some could appear more masculine but have ovaries and a uterus. This variation in human form is rarely discussed and these individuals can struggle with societal expectations of the gender binary, in other words, being "male" or "female". They deserve love, respect and acknowledgment. It would be a tragedy for someone who identifies as intersex (or anyone in the LGBTQIA Community) to go to a religious counselor and made to feel as if their identity is invalid or wrong.

Further, mental health professionals are meant to be objective and do no harm. But if there are some religious counselors who are urging clients to abandon their hearts because of made-up beliefs, they need to check themselves and their motives.