

Submitter: David Hanna

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

Measure: HB2458

As a graduate student in a professional mental health counseling program in Portland, Oregon, I urge you to support this bill as conversion therapy has been time and time again reported as harmful and damaging to client's well-being. This is not an ethical practice, as it does not abide by the principles of counseling, namely on the principles of beneficence and non-maleficence. While some may report that conversion therapy benefited them or a loved one, this does not account for the numerous instances in which it has been harmful. As sexuality is a potentially sensitive and stigmatized domain of one's identity, one may feel pressured to adhere to a more normative display of sexuality (i.e. heterosexuality). With this in mind, a counselor should not presuppose that it is truly in the client's best interest to act against their sexual dispositions, and engage in conversion therapy. Conversion therapy carries assumptions that homosexuality or gender nonconformity are pathological states, despite the DSM 5 TR not deeming them as such. With this in mind, practicing conversion therapy is inherently out of line with the conceptualization of pathology related to sexuality and gender. Conversion therapy runs in opposition with the American Counseling Association's ethical standards of the promotion of social justice and practice in a culturally sensitive manner. Furthermore, the efficacy on conversion therapy is not supported by scientific literature and studies conducted by the predominant authorities on mental health (e.g. the American Psychiatric Association, the American Psychological Association, and the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatrists). This should not be a permitted practice in Oregon, as it is not an evidence based practice, it is out of line with ethical standards of our profession, and it risks doing harm to clients. Please support this bill.