

Submitter: David Reece

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

Measure: HB2458

My name is David Reece – I live in Jacksonville, Oregon. I wish we had more time for this discussion – however it seems this has been deemed as the best path forward for this legislation. I disagree, and believe we need a more robust conversation on this bill. If this is a crisis facing Oregonians, why such a limited hearing?

Supporters of this bill will demand that you ignore that trauma or childhood experience may play a role in the formation of sexuality. They may even threaten you not to say that trauma had anything to do with your sexuality at all. They may go as far as to misrepresent you as a cult-member or as a bigoted homophobe/transphobe for speaking up against legislation like this. I have been married to my wife for 12 years. In the midst of our first several years as a married couple, I struggled with looking at gay porn – a coping mechanism and addiction that had formed in childhood – and sought counseling to address this incongruence.

A supporter of this bill would expect me to tell my wife that I ought to simply embrace a gay identity and address my internalized homophobia. Am I expected to break apart my marriage to embrace a gay identity and explain to my children that I really was never supposed to be in a relationship with their mother? While some LGBT stories do not include trauma or abuse as children – mine did. And many do. Does my story matter less or does the counseling I sought matter less because I experienced trauma and sought to resolve this as an adult?

The assertion from activists and democrats on this issue is that I was born gay and was never really in love with my wife – however, if I were to make any such assertion about the sexuality of someone in the LGBT, I would be labeled a bigot and would likely be cited for hate speech. The one way path on this issue is dangerous and will leave many people uncared for – having trauma and pain unaddressed – all for the sake of blind affirmation. Meanwhile, legislators toss around the term conversion therapy – a meaningless term which is weaponized to remove the rights of consenting adults to pursue the life they desire.

My questions surrounding this bill revolve around legality and constitutionality. Should it be illegal for someone to pursue heterosexuality if they choose?

Please consider the following:

In New York City, LGBT activists urged city council members to remove the city-wide conversion therapy ban because of fear of it being heard in the Supreme Court.

In Tampa, a federal judge struck the city's conversion therapy ban, upholding first amendment rights to free speech. This decision was based heavily on similar decisions in Boca Raton, and Palm Beach County where therapy bans had been signed into law.

In California, a state-wide ban on Conversion Therapy under "Unlawful Business Practices" was rescinded by its author and sponsor weeks after the SCOTUS

decision on NIFLA v. Becerra.

In my research I discovered that there are no legal cases on Conversion Therapy in Oregon and all of the licensing bodies have ethical standards of care which are followed by their licensees. There have been no complaints or action taken by any of the licensing bodies. Additionally, there have only been 19 cases of relating to conversion therapy in the United States which have ever been heard. Most of these cases were awarded in favor of free speech and counseling choice, or were dismissed before hearing. And so, what is the urgency of this legislation – enough to signal emergency? I believe, if the state can control speech in a confidential counseling session with a licensed therapist, what other speech can it control? The LGBT community ought to be deeply concerned about this.

If the sponsors and supporters of this bill are truly willing to approach this topic with grace and compassion, more clear and definitive language must be ascribed to the term Conversion Therapy before any ban may be placed on it. I implore you – please vote no on HB2458. Thank you.