

Submitter: Craig Stein

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

Measure: HB2458

Honorable Members of the House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care,

I write as an ordained pastor (Presbyterian) and former professor of theology. My experience with this issue is as one who has taught, cared for, counseled, consoled, learned from, labored beside, and loved a wide variety of people, many of whom have suffered persecution, abuse, discrimination, and violence for having been judged as insufficiently conforming to the dominant and dominating prejudices about gender, sexuality, and identity.

I view so-called "conversion therapy" as a coopting or bad faith abuse of the domains of psychology and psychotherapy for the illicit purpose of forced or coerced conversion to an especially toxic variety of religion that would require its members not only to profess belief in certain theological doctrines, but to feel certain emotions, drives, and desires and not others. The attempt to proscribe some interior subjective states and prescribe others, while making not only one's self-worth and position in the community, but one's eternal destiny dependent upon compliance, is an appalling attack upon human integrity, dignity, freedom, and self-determination. It is reminiscent of the worst abuses of religion in history, not least in the persecution, punishment, and execution of so-called heretics in our own colonial history. It corrupts a healing profession into an instrument of domination and violence. Whenever a class of persons in society is singled out and judged, stigmatized, and persecuted, it has all too predictably led to prosecution, incarceration, exile, and execution. This has gone too far, and I urge you to protect people from abuse by religious extremists disguised as therapists.

The Rev. Craig Stein, MDiv, PhD  
Portland, OR