

## 19<sup>th</sup> House District

Parts of NE Franklin County  
Including Gahanna, New Albany,  
Westerville, Minerva Park, and area  
townships



## Committees

Agriculture & Rural Development  
Commerce and Labor  
Higher Education

### Representative Mary Lightbody 19<sup>th</sup> House District

Testimony to the House Health Committee  
House Bill 503 <> December 15, 2020  
Mary Lightbody, Ph.D.

Chairman Lipps, Vice Chair Holmes, Ranking Member Boyd, and fellow members of the Health Committee, thank you for allowing me to testify in support of House Bill 503, **to protect minors by prohibiting certain licensed health care professionals from engaging in conversion therapy when treating minor patients.**

The purpose of this legislation is to protect Ohio's youth from "conversion therapy", an outdated and dangerous practice directed at changed their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. It is based on the false claim that being LGBTQ+ is a mental illness that must be cured. **This view has no scientific basis.** The practice of conversion therapy is opposed by professional medical and mental health associations, including the American Medical Association, the American Psychological Association, and the American Academy of Pediatrics.

20 states and Washington D.C. have laws banning conversion therapy for minors. Virginia was the most recent state to sign a law into effect in March 2020. In addition, 7 cities in Ohio (Athens, Cincinnati, Columbus, Dayton, Kent, Lakewood, and Toledo) have banned conversion therapy as well. Ohio must step up to join these other states and localities in ending this practice and prevent future harm.

My office worked with a number of partners, including Equality Ohio, the Human Rights Campaign, Equitas Health, Kaleidoscope Youth Center, the Mental Health & Addiction Advocacy Coalition, the National Association of Social Workers- Ohio Chapter, the Ohio Psychological Association, and the Ohio School Psychologists Association, to draft the language of this bill to include the health care areas that would be impacted. You will also see a Letter of Support from Sam Brinton Vice President of Advocacy and Government Affairs at The Trevor Project, a national organization providing crisis intervention and suicide prevention services to LGBTQ young people under 25.

Human beings are complex and each individual is unique. As children grow, we all learn about the world and develop an identity that expresses who we are at heart. This legislation affirms the right of young people to develop their own gender identity, gender expression, or sexual orientation without those in the medical community trying to change their minds."

The research team at the Trevor Project published a peer-reviewed article in the American Journal of Public Health in July 2020. It was the first study to look at the associations between undergoing conversion therapy and suicide outcomes among LGBTQ youth.

The key findings of the study included<sup>1</sup>,

- LGBTQ youth who underwent conversion therapy were **more than twice as likely to report having attempted suicide and more than 2.5 times as likely to report**

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Amy E. Green, Myeshia Price-Feeney, Samuel H. Dorison, and Casey J. Pick, 2020:  
**Self-Reported Conversion Efforts and Suicidality Among US LGBTQ Youths and Young Adults, 2018**  
American Journal of Public Health **110**, 1221-1227, <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2020.305701>

**multiple suicide attempts in the past year** compared to those who did not. These findings add empirical data to support the professional consensus that sexual orientation and gender identity conversion efforts are inappropriate and harmful.

- LGBTQ youth with lower family incomes, from the South, whose parents use religion to say negative things about being LGBTQ, who are Hispanic/Latinx, and who are transgender or nonbinary were overrepresented in reports of undergoing conversion therapy. This data highlights that young people who report undergoing conversion efforts are not a homogeneous population and that **efforts to address this issue must be inclusive in terms of the diversity of identities affected.**

But there are small signs of progress here in Ohio. The City of Westerville is in my district and recently joined Columbus and more than two dozen Ohio municipalities to enacted commonsense ordinance protecting LGBT individuals and their families. We know that without any real, statewide nondiscrimination protections for sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, we'll continue to see more of the same—fewer businesses relocating here and fewer young workers deciding to call Ohio home.

But we can't continue to operate on a patchwork of protections statewide. To grow pathways to the American Dream, we need to continue the march toward equality by passing commonsense legislation to benefit the hundreds of thousands of LGBT individuals and their families who live and work here. For Ohio's LGBT youth, that pathway to the America Dream means being able to live the life they imagine for themselves.

Health professionals may continue to assist patients with voluntary gender transitions; provide acceptance, support, and understanding; and facilitate a patient's coping, social support, or identity exploration and development. This legislation is not meant to be a limitation of legitimate medical and psychological practice. It is meant to protect our youth from dangerous practices from health professionals who are meant to be a source of trust for young people.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this important piece of legislation. I would be happy to answer any questions the committee members may have.

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