



State Senator
TINA MAHARATH

3rd District

Sponsor Testimony
Senator Tina Maharath
Senate Bill 130
Health, Human Services, and Medicaid Committee
Wednesday, September 18, 2019

Chairman Burke, Ranking Member Antonio, Vice Chair Huffman and members of the Health, Human Services, and Medicaid committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 130. Senate Bill 130 will prohibit certain health care professionals from engaging in conversion therapy with a person less than 18 years of age. This will not prohibit counseling that provides acceptance, support, and understanding of a person or facilitates a person's coping, social support, and identity exploration and development, including sexual orientation-neutral interventions to prevent or address unlawful conduct or unsafe sexual practices provided that these do not also seek to change one's sexual orientation.

According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, "Conversion therapy," also called reparative therapy, refers to efforts to change an individual's sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. Any attempts to change one's sexual orientation and/or gender identity are dangerous and largely discredited by medical and psychological professionals in Ohio and nationally. These harmful practices use rejection, shame, and abuse to force people, specifically young people, to try to change who they are.

The purpose of this legislation is to discourage the perception that the sexual orientation or gender identity or expression of a lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender person is a psychological disorder and to prevent treatment harmful interventions that are ineffective and harmful to minors. LGBTQ people are not disordered. This perception can lead to increased depression and greater suicide risks. People in the LGBTQ community are not diseased or psychologically underdeveloped and should not be subjected to interventions that reinforce such futile and obsolete practices.

The following organizations oppose the practice of conversion therapy: American Medical Association, American Academy of Child Adolescent Psychiatry, American Academy of Pediatrics, American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy, American College of Physicians, American Counseling Association, American Psychiatric Association, American School Counselor Association, American School Health Association, National Association of Social Workers, Pan American Health Organization (PAHO): Regional Office of the World Health Organization, and the United Nations Human Rights Council.



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The reasons these reputable organizations oppose conversion therapy is that it is both useless and harmful to children, with the American Academy of Pediatrics stating, “therapy directed at specifically changing sexual orientation is contraindicated, since it can provoke guilt and anxiety while having little or no potential for achieving changes in orientation.” Numerous other health organizations have also made it clear that sexual orientation and gender identity cannot, and should not, be changed. Ohio should join the states of Illinois, New Jersey, Oregon, California, Vermont, Nevada, New Mexico, Rhode Island and Connecticut in outlawing this dangerous practice.

We cannot allow one more person to be targeted by these dangerous and discredited practices. Ohio needs legislation to educate parents and youth and to protect those who are harmed by ill-informed, unethical mental health professionals. Chairman Burke and members of the Committee, I appreciate your attention to this important issue and I respectfully request your favorable consideration and passage of Senate Bill 130. Thank you and I am happy to respond to questions from the committee.