

To Whom It May Concern,

The undersigned organizations are pleased to support legislation prohibiting licensed therapists from administering so-called “conversion therapy” to young people under the age of 18. Conversion therapy refers to a set of practices by mental health providers that purport to change a person’s sexual orientation or gender identity. These harmful practices are based on the outdated and discredited notion that being lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT) is a mental illness that can and should be cured. In fact, every mainstream medical and mental health association has rejected this claim as scientifically invalid, and has warned that these practices are ineffective and pose potentially serious risks of harm, especially to children.

We are organizations committed to advancing the well-being of vulnerable children and youth, and to combatting practices that cause them harm. Virtually all young people encounter challenges as they navigate the treacherous terrain of adolescence in our complex culture. LGBT youth face additional hurdles coming to terms with their identities in unsupportive or even openly hostile environments. Family rejection, school bullying, and social isolation place LGBT youth at significantly higher risk of suicide, homelessness, sexual assault, substance abuse and incarceration. These risk factors are exacerbated when licensed professionals subject these young people to harmful interventions whose sole purpose is to strip them of their emerging identities.

State legislatures have a strong interest in ensuring that licensed mental health providers adhere to professional standards of care and refrain from engaging in ineffective and discredited practices that place patients at serious risk of harm. These laws are especially needed to protect minors, who are almost always forced to undergo conversion therapy by parents or legal guardians who do not understand that they are putting their children at risk of serious harm.

This bill will curb harmful practices known to produce lifelong damage to young people who need and deserve the state’s protection. We strongly support this legislation and thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

Advocates for Youth

Center for Children’s Law and Policy

Children’s Law Center

Children’s Law Center of California

Kentucky Youth Law Project, Inc.

Legal Services for Children

National Center for Youth Law

National Council on Crime and Delinquency

Pridelines Youth Services

Youth Law Center