HRCP Bill: Prohibiting Conversion Therapy on Minors

- This bill will protect LGBTQ youth from dangerous and discredited practices aimed at changing their sexual orientation or gender identity or expression.
- Conversion therapy is based on the false claim that being LGBTQ is a mental illness that needs to be cured – a view that has been rejected as scientifically invalid by the American Psychiatric Association and every major medical and mental health group for decades.
- This bill is aimed at state-licensed therapists, operating their practice in the City and County of Denver, who are falsely claiming that being gay or transgender is a mental illness, and therefore taking advantage of parents and harming vulnerable youth.
- These harmful practices use rejection, shame, and psychological abuse to force young people to try to change who they are.
- These practices are known to be extremely dangerous and can lead to depression, decreased self-esteem, substance abuse, and even suicide.
- No young person should ever be shamed by a mental health professional into thinking that who they are is wrong. Mental health professionals should provide care that is ethical and affirming for all people – including LGBTQ young people.
- We can’t allow one more young person to be targeted and hurt by these dangerous and discredited practices.
- Colorado law already protects pastors and clergy who engage in the practice of religious ministry – even if they are licensed as a mental health provider by the state – as long as they are not holding themselves out as a licensee at the time of religious ministry.

Background

Conversion therapy – sometimes referred to as “reparative therapy,” “ex-gay therapy,” or “sexual orientation change efforts” – includes a range of dangerous and discredited practices aimed at changing a person’s sexual orientation or suppressing a person’s gender identity.

These harmful practices are based on the false claim that being lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer is a mental illness that should be cured. Every mainstream mental health and medical professional association in the country has rejected this view as scientifically invalid. Unfortunately, many young people are coerced and subjected to these harmful practices, which put them at risk for depression, substance abuse, and suicide.

How will this bill protect LGBTQ young people?

This municipal ban will protect young people from practices aimed at changing their sexual orientation or suppressing their gender identity. It will prohibit state-licensed mental health care providers in Colorado from practicing conversion therapy on youth under the age of 18. This bill will help young people receive mental health care that is ethical and affirming.

Does this bill impact religious counseling?

No. This bill will have no impact on religious or non-licensed counseling services. This municipal ban only applies to mental health care providers licensed by the state of Colorado. Pastors and clergy who engage in the practice of religious ministry – even if they are licensed by the state – are exempted in Colorado law as long as they are not holding themselves out as a licensee at the time of religious ministry.

What do mental health and medical professionals have to say about conversion therapy?

The American Psychological Association “advises parents, guardians, young people and their families to avoid sexual orientation change efforts that portray homosexuality as a mental illness or developmental disorder.” Additionally, the American Medical Association “opposes the use of ‘reparative’ or ‘conversion’ therapy that is based upon the assumption that homosexuality per se is a mental disorder.”