

To the people of the committee, my name is Taylor LaVoi, and I oppose bill HB1332. I am going to tell you my story as to why I do not support this bill. As a healthcare provider in this state working on an inpatient psychiatric unit and as an overtly queer person living in this state, of all the bills that are being suggested this one hits the most home for me.

When I came out, I became paralyzed by a severe depression as I realized the love I had in my life from family was conditional. The depression impacted my ability to work as a therapist in healthcare and I needed to leave the field to learn how to stay alive with the void of my family's love.

I spoke with my grandma during this time, one of the people whose conditional love presented itself to me, and you know what she said to me as I told her I was getting involved with therapy? Background information on my grandma, she couldn't even tell you what conversion therapy is, she just has embedded homophobia in her belief system. She said to me, "good I hope you get involved with a straight man that will get you on track." The other things I began to hear was, "on judgment day the choice will be where you go because of this." In addition to, "we are just so heart broken because we wanted to spend forever with you in eternal heaven."

I have invested thousands and thousands of dollars in my mental health to try to understand if as a person that is queer I even deserve to have a place in this world, and if I don't have a place in this world being alive, am I a bad person for who I love which would equate for me to burn in hell? These questions have fueled my depression and caused disabling impacts in my life because there are no answers to these questions. I can feel the onset of my depression coming back into my life merely reading these bills. How can we find this justifiable to support conversion therapy? To say there's one way to love and that all other love needs to burn? How can we truly tell ourselves it's okay to let other people internalize their homophobia to the point where they want to die by suicide because the love they give and receive is bad love?

I refuse to let myself be consumed by these thoughts, and I promise you this, if this bill turns into a law, I will leave this state and I will tell others that the stigma of how the world knows North Dakota is real. This state already is impacted by minimal growth, and if there's a decision to integrate this law specifically, there will be less growth from millennials, gen zs, and the following generations to come.

Who taught you how to love? Do you know if you're doing it right? If you're doing it right, do you think you deserve to burn in hell for the way you love? I hope you're living a life of truth with how you decide to live a life filled with love, the same way I try to live mine.

Thank you for your time, energy, and honoring my story.