

Dear Chair Weisz and members of the House Human Services Committee,

My testimony is in opposition to House Bill 1332. I ask that you give this bill a Do Not Pass.

I am an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ and a resident of Clay County, Minnesota. Members of my church reside in North Dakota. In 2021 my denomination passed a resolution calling on clergy and congregations to condemn conversion therapy.

A “Williams Institute” report from “(June 15, 2020),” found that” LGBTQ+ people who were subjected to conversion therapy have shown a greater risk of suicidal thoughts and attempted suicide

- 92% greater odds of lifetime suicidal ideation,
- 88% greater odds of attempting suicide,

The consensus of the mental health care profession was summed up in the “Position Statement on Attempts to Change Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, or Gender Expression” released by the American Psychoanalytic Association in 2012. They found: “Psychoanalytic technique does not ... “convert,” “repair,” change or shift an individual’s sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. Such directed efforts are against fundamental principles of psychoanalytic treatment.”

In short, conversation therapy is both harmful to mental health and against mental health care professional standards.

My faith and my experience of God as the energy of love, calls me to speak against this bill, against conversion therapy. My study of the two testaments of the Christian bible show me that neither God, nor the bible, condemns same gender loving and gender expansive people. A review of the healing stories of Jesus shows that people left his treatment whole, not 92% more broken.

HB1332 threatens the most vulnerable among us, minors and vulnerable adults, those for whom the law appoints guardians. If a type of cast or splint increased limb amputation by 92%, we would ban the use of the cast or splint. Continuing to use it would be criminal.

That is the point we are at with conversion therapy. The practice is harmful, barbaric even. Professionals in the field say it is a violation of ethics. Studies show that 92% of people who receive this treatment are harmed by it. It is time for the State of North Dakota to prevent this practice.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and service to our state

Best regards,

Rev. Michelle Webber