

## Chairman Weisz and members of the House Human Services Committee,

My name is Maura Ferguson and I am writing this testimony as a resident of ND and independently from my employer. My views do not represent my employer. I write to you today as a licensed social worker, community organizer, a mother, and as someone who cares very much about the LGBTQIA+ community.

I strongly oppose HB 1332 and urge you to do the same. This bill is completely antithetical to the National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics, to which all North Dakota licensed social workers are legally bound. NASW released a position statement on conversion therapy in 2015 which expressly states that conversion therapy “violates the very tenets of the social work profession as outlined in the NASW Code of Ethics. The NASW Code of Ethics (1998) enunciates principles that address ethical decision making in social work practice with lesbians, gay men, bisexual, and transgender people; for example: 1) social workers’ commitment to clients’ self-determination and competence, and to achieving cultural competence and understanding social diversity, 2) social workers’ ethical responsibilities to colleagues, their commitment to interdisciplinary collaboration, and their responsibility to report unethical conduct of colleagues, 3) social workers’ ethical responsibilities as professionals—maintaining competence, fighting discrimination, and avoiding misrepresentation, and 4) social workers’ ethical responsibilities to the social work profession, to evaluation, and to research. The National Committee on LGBT Issues asserts that conversion therapy or SOCE are an infringement of the guiding principles inherent to social worker ethics and values; a position affirmed by the NASW policy statement on “Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Issues” (NASW 2014).” The entire position statement can be found at this link: <https://www.socialworkers.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=yH3UsGQQmYI%3D>

Moreover, conversion therapy has been disavowed by many expert, respected, ethical organizations, including the American Medical Association, the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy, the American College of Physicians, the American Counseling Association, the American Psychiatric Association, the American Psychological Association, the American School Counselor Association, and the Pan American Health Organization. This list is by no means exhaustive, but it is lengthy. This goes to show how harmful the practice of conversion therapy is. It has no place in our state.

I urge you to listen to the experts, allow ND social workers to stay within the bounds of our Code of Ethics, and vote Do Not Pass on HB 1332.

Maura Ferguson, LMSW

