



January 24, 2023

To the Members of the North Dakota House Human Services Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to express our opposition to House Bill 1332, which would exempt state-licensed mental health providers from responsible regulation of professional ethics in regard to so-called “conversion therapy.”

I am the co-founder of Born Perfect, a survivor-led movement of survivors and legal experts working to end conversion therapy. In the past eight years, Born Perfect has helped to pass laws protecting minors from conversion therapy in 20 states, the District of Columbia, and more than 80 localities. We have also consulted with several legislative bodies and public officials considering similar legislation in other countries.

As a survivor of conversion therapy, I know first-hand that attempts by a therapist to change a person’s sexual orientation or gender identity result in serious, lasting harms. Like many other young people, I believed the professional therapists who told me I could change my sexual orientation and become straight. But after five years of doing everything that I could to change, I was plunged into depression and despair upon realizing that these “therapies” were bogus and that I could not change.

Like other survivors, it has taken me years to recover from the damage this experience caused. I will never be able to recover the time that I spent in this harmful and discredited treatment, which prevented me for years from living as my true self and robbed me of years that I will never regain. Conversion therapy also nearly destroyed my family, driving a wedge between me and my parents and siblings, based on my therapists’ false assertion that being gay is caused by problems or deficiencies in parenting.

There is absolutely no scientific basis for that assertion, which underlies almost all conversion therapy.



By blaming parents, conversion therapists drive a wedge between LGBTQ youth and their families at the very time when young people most need parental love and support. No matter what a person's religious or moral beliefs, people from across the political and religious spectrum have recognized that subjecting a young person to conversion therapy is destructive and harmful.

As my experience and that of other survivors shows, conversion therapy is an insidious practice that has no place in the practice of modern mental health care.

Since California passed the first law protecting minors from conversion therapy in 2012, many more states and localities in the United States, and a growing number of countries across the globe, have taken action to address this public health crisis.

These laws have been supported by elected officials from across the political spectrum, in recognition that this is truly an issue of public health, not politics, and that all responsible public officials have a responsibility to protect young people from a practice that is universally condemned as ineffective and unsafe by the international medical community.

For these reasons, we strongly support regulation protecting minors from conversion therapy, and we urge you to vote against this bill.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a series of overlapping, fluid strokes that form a stylized, somewhat abstract shape.

Mathew Shurka
Co-Founder, Born Perfect

