

TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO HB 1430

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Chair Ruby and Members of the House Human Services Committee:

I am a retired social worker and social work professor and a current member of the North Dakota Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers. Before retirement, I worked as a family therapist in the field of child welfare and taught social work classes at MSU-Moorhead, UND, and NDSU. **I am strongly opposed to HB 1430 for the following reasons:**

1. **“Conversion therapies” ARE an ethical violation.** Social workers licensed by the North Dakota Board of Social Work Examiners are not formally prepared to engage in any type of sexual orientation or gender conversion effort, or as it is called in HB 1430, “a treatment plan or counseling plan that aligns with heterosexuality or the individual's biological sex.”
 - a. Social workers are not prepared because such “treatment or counseling plans” are not taught in accredited schools of social work;
 - b. Such “treatment or counseling plans” are not taught in accredited schools of social work because the National Association of Social Workers upholds that sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression are real and irrefutable forms of identity, that **any forms of conversion practice stand in direct conflict with the NASW professional code of ethics**, and that these practices represent a significant risk of harm to the individuals subjected to them.¹
2. **“Conversion therapies” are unscientific, ineffective, and dangerous.** In addition to the NASW, ALL major medical and mental health organizations (including, among others, the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy, the American Counseling Association, the American Medical Association, the American Psychiatric Association, and the American Psychological Association) have expressed their “professional and scientific consensus on the impropriety, inefficacy, and detriments of practices that seek to change a person’s sexual orientation or gender identity, commonly referred to as ‘conversion therapy’.”²
3. **Legislators are not trained to determine ethical social work practice.** Members of the North Dakota state legislature should be protecting, not imposing personally-held religious beliefs on, the citizens of the state. Furthermore, it is not the place of the state legislature to determine ethical practice for any profession. Professional organizations, such as the National Association of Social Workers, the Council on Social Work Education and the other organizations listed above, are best able to determine and offer ethical and evidence-based education and practices which can support and improve the well-being of individuals and families.

I urge the Committee to vote **Do Not Pass** on this misguided and misinformed bill.

¹ [NASW, Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity](#)

² [Human Rights Campaign, The Lies and Dangers of Efforts to Change Sexual Orientation or Gender Identity](#)