

OPPOSING HOUSE BILL 1430:

A BILL for an Act to create and enact a new section to chapter 43-41 of the North Dakota Century Code, relating to the regulation of social workers.

Sponsors: Introduced by Rep. VanWinkle, Rep. K. Anderson, Rep. Bolinske, Sen. Castaneda, Rep. Christianson, Rep. Frelich, Rep. Heilman, Rep. Hoverson, Rep. Kasper, Rep. Koppelman, Rep. Louser, Sen. Paulson

Please include this written testimony with the Human Services Committee Hearing testimony journal for public record.

Chair Representative Matthew Ruby (Officer, ND Army National Guard, D40 - Minot)
Vice Chair Representative Kathy Frelich (NDSO Hearing Outreach Specialist, D15 - Devils Lake)
2025 Human Services Committee Representatives:
Karen A. Anderson (Licensed Hairdresser, D19 - Grafton)
Mike Beltz (Farmer, D20 - Hillsboro)
Macy Bolinske (Bookkeeper, D40 - Minot)
Jayme Davis (Policy Specialist, D9 - Rolette)
Gretchen Dobervich (Public Health Policy Program Director, D11 - Fargo)
Clayton Fegley (Retired Farmer, D4B - Berthold)
Jared Hendrix (Consultant, D10 - West Fargo)
Dawson Holle (Dairy Farmer, D31 - Mandan)
Dwight Kiefert (Farmer, D24 - Valley City)
Nico Rios (Wireline Operator, D23 - Williston)
Karen M. Rohr (Adjunct Faculty Professor in Higher Education and Nurse Practitioner, D31 - Mandan)

Greetings.

My name is Kevin R. Tengesdal. I am a citizen of North Dakota residing in Bismarck's District 35. I am a Navy veteran, a publicist and graphic designer, a Bible college BA graduate, and a UND MSW graduate. As a Christian who is gay and a proponent for the respect and dignity of humanity, I resolutely request a unanimous DO NOT PASS on House Bill 1430 as presented or amended.

This bill's sponsors are two real estate brokers, a licensed hairdresser, a bookkeeper, an air medical pilot, a railroad roadmaster, a hearing outreach specialist, a political student, a member of the clergy, a management group president, a commercial construction worker, and a rancher. All very honorable professions.

However, no mental health therapist professionals, licensed social workers, or any expert from the North Dakota Social Work Licensure Board or the NASW North Dakota Chapter are among the sponsors. These are the professionals who know the American Psychiatric Association (APA) removed homosexuality as a diagnosis from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) in 1973. These professionals know the conflict of "conversion therapy" (CT) and are experts in this area.

What is "a treatment plan or counseling plan that aligns with heterosexuality or the individual's biological sex?" This is known as "conversion therapy" or "reparative therapy." GLAAD – the world's largest Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) media advocacy

organization – defines “conversion therapy” as any attempt to change a person’s sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression¹. A research study from Cornell University states that this type of therapy is an ineffective pseudo-therapy. Peer-reviewed studies indicate that there is no credible evidence that “conversion therapies” are effective in changing sexual orientation.

GLAAD indicates that as the practice of “conversion therapy” has come under peer-reviewed research-based scrutiny, “conversion therapy” providers (and conservative promoters) frequently change the terminology to further their agenda. Some may frame their abusive practices as “pastoral care” rather than psychology. Many participants in “conversion therapy” programs are young people who are coerced into them by their parents after being advised by religious authorities or others that they must transform their child in question.

“Conversion therapies” pose a negative effect on those individuals “questioning the individual's sexuality or gender,” most notably youth. A San Francisco State University study found that “compared with LGBTQ young people who were not rejected or were only a little rejected by their parents and caregivers because of their gay or transgender identity,”² highly rejected LGBTQ young people were prone to attempts of suicide, using illegal drugs, and higher levels of depression I certainly hope the Representatives who have introduced this bill, their constituents, and supporters of this bill do not want these statistics to be representative of North Dakota’s LGBTQ youth.

Routinely, we hear of the statistics of LGBTQ youth and risk behaviors. Many assume it is because of this “chosen lifestyle.” In reality, we must acknowledge that rejection, bigotry, and hostility against LGBTQ individuals are some of the reasons for various types of risk behaviors. Not for being who they are but for being told not to be who they are — the “you can be queer, but just do not do the queer” ideology. Imagine your family daily telling you that you can be Christian (a chosen lifestyle) while advising you not to do the Christian stuff in public.

I am not a mental health therapist professional or a licensed social worker. However, I am a survivor of “conversion therapy.” Through the 1990s, I put myself through a decade of varying degrees of “conversion therapy” or “pray away the gay” efforts, all in a religious futile attempt to “fix myself.” “Conversion therapy” is a futile attempt to pull the homosexuality out of a person, fill that void with heterosexuality, and quite simply leave a gaping wound.

I implore you and the 2025 North Dakota Legislative Assembly members to stand on the right side of dignity and respect and vote against this destructive bill. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,
Kevin R. Tengesdal, Bismarck - D35

¹ *GLAAD Media Reference Guide – In Focus: ‘conversion therapy’ (2024)* GLAAD. Available at: <https://glaad.org/reference/conversion-therapy/> (Accessed: 18 January 2025)

² *What does the scholarly research say about whether conversion therapy can alter sexual orientation without causing harm? (2021) What We Know.* Available at: <https://whatweknow.inequality.cornell.edu/topics/lgbt-equality/what-does-the-scholarly-research-say-about-whether-conversion-therapy-can-alter-sexual-orientation-without-causing-harm/> (Accessed: 18 January 2025).