

TESTIMONY on HB 1430 from Bret A Weber, PhD, MSW, UND Social Work Professor
to the ND House Human Services Committee January 17, 2025

The following opinions are my own and do not represent the view or opinions of my employer. I am submitting this testimony as a licensed social worker and in opposition to House Bill 1430.

First, allow me to note that I served for twelve years as an elected official on the Grand Forks City Council. I have great respect for policy makers and appreciate the work they do. Additionally, I learned to steer clear of partisan issues and to value the importance of working across the aisle to develop sound policies.

I am opposed to HB 1430 for the following reasons:

1. As a social work educator I hope that legislators will understand that conversion therapy--which is what HB 1430 is essentially promoting, though it is careful to avoid that term or related language--is not taught in our curriculum. We do not offer training on this, and indeed we discuss why conversion therapy is considered pseudoscience and not approved by our professional and accreditation bodies.

2. Legislative bodies should refrain from dictating the processes and requirements of professional licensing bodies, especially in relation to broadly accepted and longstanding ethical standards.

3. HB 1430 asserts that it is **not** an ethical violation for social workers to engage in the pseudotherapy commonly called “conversion therapy” or “reparative therapy.” **However, it is an ethical violation for licensed social workers to engage in “conversion or reparative therapies” for the following reasons:**

a) **“Conversion or reparative therapy” is an ineffective pseudotherapy.** Peer reviewed studies indicate that there is no credible evidence that “conversion therapies” are effective in changing sexual orientation.² Further, in 2021, the ND Board of Social Work Examiners added the following language to Administrative Code 75.5-02-06.1-01: “... it is a violation of the code of ethics for a social worker licensed by the board to engage in any practices or treatments that attempt to change or repair...sexual orientation or gender identity...”¹ [i.e., “conversion or reparative therapies”].

As such, if licensed social workers practice “conversion therapies,” they may be held legally liable for its ineffectiveness given that “conversion therapies” violate the social work profession’s code of ethics and standard of care. HB 1430 essentially asks social workers to ignore their profession’s ethical and clinical standards of practice.

b) **“Conversion or reparative therapy” is a dangerous pseudotherapy.** Valid and reliable studies indicate that “conversion therapies” are harmful and are associated with adverse health effects such as anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation, and suicide attempts.^{3,4}

c) **“Conversion or reparative therapy” is a discredited pseudotherapy.** The National Association of Social Workers was one of the first mental health associations to condemn this discredited activity. All major U.S. mental health and medical associations including, but not limited to, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Medical Association, the American Psychiatric Association, and the American Psychological Association publicly recognize the dangers of sexual orientation and gender identity change efforts.^{5, 6}

With this submitted testimony I am respectfully requesting that the House Human Services Committee vote Do Not Pass on this bill.

Testimony submitted by Bret A Weber, PhD, MSW

Bret A Weber

Footnotes:

¹ [Code of Ethics](#)

² [Research on "conversion therapies"](#)

³ [Summary of findings on "conversion therapy"](#)

⁴ [Ending "Conversion Therapy"](#)

⁵ [Lies and Dangers of "Reparative Therapy"](#)

⁶ [American Psychological Association](#); [American Psychiatric Association](#)