



Testimony on HB 1430
North Dakota Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers
20 January, 2025
House Human Services Committee

Chairman Ruby and Members of the Human Services Committee,

My name is Elizabeth Loos and I submit this testimony on behalf of the North Dakota Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW-ND).

In 2021, the Administrative Rules Committee passed by majority vote the ND Board of Social Work Examiners' (NDBSWE)-proposed changes to their administrative code. These changes included language explicitly stating that it is an ethical violation for a licensed social worker to practice conversion therapy.

The sponsors of this bill seek to undermine the rules written by professional social workers and the administrative rule making process, and **approved by the Administrative Rules Committee**. Lines 7-9 of HB 1430 read:

It is not an ethical violation for a licensee to offer an individual questioning the individual's sexuality or gender a treatment plan or counseling plan that aligns with heterosexuality of the individual's biological sex.

Though the words "conversion therapy" do not appear in HB 1430, that is precisely what is described.

Do the sponsors of this bill not trust the professionals appointed by the Governor? Of the seven members on NDBSWE, two are licensed clinical social workers, two are licensed baccalaureate social workers, one is a licensed master social worker, and two are members of the public. These are professionals, vetted and appointed by the governor. NDBSWE completed a lengthy process to update their administrative rules, and solicited comments from social workers and the general public throughout the state both in writing and in public meetings. Do the sponsors of this bill presume their *opinion* of ethical social work practice should override the judgment of professional social workers? Shouldn't we trust trained, licensed, and experienced social workers to best determine ethical social work practice?

We're dismayed that the sponsors of this bill are willing to deem a practice known to increase suicide attempts as an "ethical" practice in North Dakota. Conversion therapy is ineffective, dangerous, and discredited. All major U.S. mental health and medical associations unequivocally denounce conversion therapy because of the immense harm it causes.

It seems to me that House Bill 1430 is government overreach. This bill is "big brother" telling social workers what is and is not ethical practice – in spite of best practices and extensive research.

I urge you to trust the judgement of licensed professional social workers to keep residents safe and decrease suicide attempts and completions in North Dakota.

On behalf of the North Dakota Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers, I urge you to make a Do Not Pass recommendation.

Respectfully,

Elizabeth Loos
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North Dakota Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers