Dear Chair Weisz and members of the House Human Services Committee,

My testimony is in opposition to House Bill 1332. I ask that you give this bill a Do Not Pass.
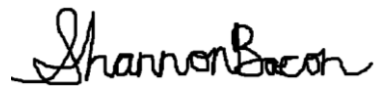
Through my training and experience as a Licensed Social Worker, I am confident in stating that any practices or treatments attempting to change sexual orientation or gender identity among lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) individuals are both unethical and deeply harmful. I stand in full support of the LGBTQ+ community.

Regardless of your personal stance on LGBTQ+ identities, please consider the life and death ramifications of this bill. The harms of conversion therapies are well documented. In comparison to LGBTQ+ youth who receive acceptance and support, those who receive conversion therapy are eight times as likely to have attempted suicide, six times as likely to report high levels of depression, and three times as likely to use illegal drugs. If you believe in suicide prevention, if you believe in reducing the risks of substance abuse and drug overdose, you must, in good conscious, reject this bill.

The professional and scientific evidence is clear – experts agree that conversion therapy does not work, and in fact is harmful to LGBTQ+ people. My professional association, the National Association of Social Workers, understands the harms of any therapy or intervention claiming to change a client's gender identity or sexual orientation. Many professional organizations agree, including the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Counseling Association, the American School Counselor Association, Mental Health America, the National Association of School Psychologists, and others.

Please prioritize the life and health of your constituents, as well as professional ethics of licensed providers across our state, and give this bill a Do Not Pass.

Sincerely,

Shannon Bacon, LSW, MSW

Fargo, ND