

Testimony Prepared for the
House Human Services Committee

January 24, 2023

By: Holly Hammarsten

Chairperson of the North Dakota Board of Social Work Examiners

RE: House Bill 1332

Chairman Weisz and House Human Services Committee members, my name is Holly Hammarsten, and I am the Chair of the North Dakota Board of Social Work Examiners. I am testifying today in opposition to House Bill 1332.

On June 8, 2021, The North Dakota Board of Social Work Examiners testified before the Administrative Rules Committee regarding the updating of North Dakota Board of Social Workers Administrative Rules. The updated Administrative Rules included language indicating the practice of conversion therapy is an ethical violation for licensed social workers.

As you all are aware, on that day in June of 2021, public comment was taken, testimony was given, and a vote was held. The North Dakota Administrative Rules Committee voted to approve the change as presented—making it an ethical violation for a social worker to practice conversion therapy in the state of North Dakota. Many hours of research by the North Dakota Board went into writing the administrative rules. That research included the reading of many professional associations' stances on conversion therapy. The National Association of Social Workers, the American Medical Association, the Academy of Child Adolescent Psychiatry, the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy and the American College of Physicians all state that conversion therapy is harmful and not based on any scientific evidence to support the use of conversion therapy. Furthermore, all declared that the practice of conversion therapy caused irreparable harm to those individuals who were forced to endure conversion therapy.

Conversion therapy causes irreparable harm to individuals and has no scientific evidence supporting the use of this therapy. The Administrative

Rules Committee heard the testimony and approved the language in the rewrite of the Administrative Code pertaining to Social Workers.

As the Chair, I am concerned that the sponsors would dismiss the recommendations of the board and bring a knowingly harmful bill forward.

The North Dakota Board of Social Work Examiners urges you make a do not pass recommendation on House Bill 1332.

Thank you, and I would stand for any questions.

Holly Hammarsten