

Dear Vermont General Assembly~

A letter in opposition to S.132 Change Therapy Ban:

As a parent and citizen, I have grave concerns regarding the push to criminalize authentic Reparative Therapy.

It is well documented that homosexual feelings can be the result of childhood sexual abuse. Even the APA has stated that homosexual feelings can be partly attributed to the environment a child is raised in, and has stated that they are disappointed that in the 25 years of genetic research, there has been no discovery of a “gay gene”.

Many of these children have suffered horrible abuse by sexual predators. How can we as compassionate human beings, look into their grief stricken faces, and tell them that no therapist can help them? Authentic Reparative Therapy is conducted by licensed clinicians whose first goal is to end the toxic shame that binds these children/adults over their homosexual thoughts and feelings. Isn't it true that one of the most time honored ethical and professional tenets of any counseling profession, is to allow for client self-determination? Child sexual abuse has one of the highest risks for suicide. If this ban is passed, you will in essence be telling these children that their stories of shame, despair and suicidal feelings do NOT matter.

I am concerned that you have not heard expert testimony from the number of researchers and doctors on the harms of banning SOCE therapy. I will list just a few of what these experts have said:

Dr. Eric Vilain, professor of pediatrics and human genetics and director of the Center for Gender-Based Biology, and J. Michael Bailey, psychology professor of Northwestern University wrote an op-ed which appeared in the L.A. Times and the Chicago Tribune. They warned lawmakers against banning CT for minors, that attempts by lawmakers to ban “all therapist from helping families trying to alleviate children’s gender dysphoria would be a triumph of ideology over science.” These doctors and others have stated that the science has not been settled, and that they as experts do not know at this time whether encouraging gender-confusion is doing more harm than good.

Dr. Kenneth Zucker, a highly respected researcher and world-renowned expert on childhood sexual/gender identity issues, has stated that it is in the best interests of the child to encourage acceptance of their biological sex. According to the DSM-V, the diagnostic “bible” written by the American Psychiatric Association, up to 88%-94% of gender dysphoric children chose to remain their biological sex once they reach adulthood. It is important to know that Dr. Zucker is so well respected, that he was asked by the APA to be the Chairman of their DSM-V Sexual and Gender Identity Disorders work group. Dr. Zucker is hardly a ‘fringe’ researcher.

John Hopkins Medical Center stopped offering gender reassignment surgery, because once they actually researched the results, they found that their patients were even more dysfunctional. Dr Meyers, the chairman of the John Hopkins gender clinic reported, “to

say this type of surgery cures psychiatric disturbances is incorrect. We now have objective evidence that there is no real difference in the transsexual's adjustment to life in terms of job, educational attainment, marital adjustment and social stability. Surgery is not a proper treatment for a psychiatric disorder, and it is clear to me these patients have severe psychological problems." Research shows that suicide risk remains very high even after sex reassignment. This is the case even in Sweden, which is one of the most LGBTQ+ affirming countries in the world.

Anecdotal stories of harm coming from authentic Reparative Therapy, have been unfounded. One for example, came from Samuel Brinton's testimony and Brielle Goldani's testimony to the New Jersey legislature. Goldani testified to lawmakers that he "was tortured and electrocuted" at a church camp, named "True Directions", after being sent there by his parents. Although many people believed his story, once it was actually looked into further, it fell utterly apart. To add some levity to my very serious letter, "There was such an "anti-gay" camp, but it was part of a 1999 movie starring the drag-queen, RuPaul."

I strongly urge you to oppose S.132. Children need to be able to tell their authentic Reparative Therapist, that their feelings of suicide are connected to being sexually abused by another male. Reports of harm done to patients by clinicians treating disorders such as depression, anxiety, etc..., abound, as can be expected in any helping profession. I'd like to close by asking the question, if this is true, then why are there no reports of harm filed by transgender patients against licensed reparative clinicians in the last 35-40 years?

Thank you for allowing me to speak to the General Assembly of Vermont.

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