

March 17, 2017

To: House Committee On Health Care
From: Rick Barnett, Psy.D., LADC
Re: H. 230

Honorable Chairperson, Vice-Chair and Members of the House Committee on Health Care,

This letter is being submitted in support of H.230, a bill that proposes to allow minors to consent to mental health treatment for any condition related to the minor's sexual orientation or gender identity. My support of H.230 is my own and does not represent any organization, agency, committee, or group with which I may be associated.

As a psychologist-doctorate and licensed alcohol and drug abuse counselor, I have had the privilege of working with minors and adults from diverse backgrounds and across different settings from hospitals to clinics to private organizations and independent practice.

The bill is straight forward and makes a lot of sense. This bill aims to create a place of trust and safety within a therapeutic environment for minors to disclose their innermost thoughts and feelings associated with sexual orientation and gender identity. Allowing minors to consent for psychotherapeutic treatment without being subject to disaffirmance and without a requirement for consent by a parent or legal guardian provides safeguards to allow full disclosure of conflicting thoughts, feelings, and/or behaviors that the minor might not otherwise share without such protections.

Two questions to consider pertaining to this bill though not offered as suggested amendments are:

1. Is there an age at which a minor cannot provide his/her own consent and should that be defined?
2. Are there other issues facing minors that would encourage them to seek and utilize services offered by mental health professionals or institutions if similar provisions were made for those issues?

Thank you for the opportunity to weigh in on this issue and thank you for your service to Vermonters!

Sincerely,

On File

Rick Barnett, Psy.D., LADC