



April 11, 2017

As the Executive Director of the Vermont Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health, I am writing today to question the wide open extent of bill H230 as it applies to parental consent of any minor of any age.

Any legislation that would further divide the family unit needs to be thought through very carefully. This bill suggest that all young adults who are questioning their sexual orientation or gender identity will absolutely not want or need parental involvement in these sensitive issues, and also assumes that all parents will not be supportive and want to help their child walk through issues that affect their well being and future.

Our organization has supported several thousand Vermont families over the years, and has found that most parents are supportive and really do want to help their children. We are aware that some parents may not be supporting, especially in this area that is somewhat of a new territory to navigate with your child, and some youth will need support from a mental health professional. What we object to in this bill is the wide open phrase of "consent by minors." A minor is technically anyone under the age of majority. Families need and must have the right to navigate and support their minor children through any medical challenge and /or crisis they encounter, which includes mental health counseling. This bill goes too far and does not limit the age of the minor. The age of the minor must be outlined or defined, and we suggest that adolescents ages 13 to majority be considered in this bill. Those under the age of 13 should not be included at all in the ability of a minor to give consent for mental health treatment.

We further suggest that some terms be defined, such as "supportive counseling." And we feel the bill should contain the need for such legislation. Perhaps stating that a minor of 13 or older whose parent will not give consent has the right to seek Mental Health treatment or counseling, under their own consent .

We believe the wide openness of this proposed legislation could be potentially damaging to family relations, and have unintended consequences.

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