

To: Senate Health and Welfare

From: Keith E Goslant

Re: Support for H.230 An act relating to consent by minors for mental health treatment related to sexual orientation and gender identity

As a brief introduction, I am Keith E Goslant, a current resident of Montpelier and a gay native Vermonter. I am writing in support of H.230 and to publicly acknowledge that my mother was right.

I grew up in Plainfield, a small Vermont community of approximately 1,300 residents. I always knew I was gay, but did not always have the words to express it, or to fully understand the emotions associated with it. What I was fortunate to find, was a supportive community member who was also an instructor on early childhood development at Goddard, the local college. This instructor opened her home to, and created a supportive environment for, the friends of her daughter who happened to be my age. It was through this supportive environment that I could finally define and understand all those thoughts and emotions. Because of this I was able to come out to my parents at the age of 17; this is where that “mother was right” comes in.

When I shared my revelations with my mother, she commented, with tears in her eyes, that she always thought I was gay. However, it was something neither she nor my father understood or about which they had enough comfort to address. She said they had hoped that I would find those people and opportunities that would provide me the support they couldn't. She hoped that I understood that their silence did not mean they did not care, but instead it was to ensure they didn't do or say something wrong. I told her they had done everything right, as they still wanted to be my parents. She was right in allowing me to find my own way, and my own resources. She was also right to continue to stand close by, patiently waiting for me to be able to find the words I could share with her.

Although it has been 46 years since that conversation with my mother, I am not convinced that the process is essentially different for LGBTQ youth today. As one of the founders of Outright VT, the need of a supportive environment for youth was clear. However, that same youth may need the opportunity to talk about all those thoughts and emotions, make sense of them, before stepping forward to share that information with their family, and before finding those Friday night support groups offered by Outright.

I thank you for the support that has already been extended to VT's LGBTQ communities and respectfully ask that you support H.230.