

2023 HOUSE HUMAN SERVICES

HB 1332

2023 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Human Services Committee Pioneer Room, State Capitol

HB 1332
1/24/2023

Relating to the regulation of social workers.

Chairman Weisz called the meeting to order at 3:02 PM .

Chairman Robin Weisz, Vice Chairman Matthew Ruby, Reps. Karen A. Anderson, Mike Beltz, Clayton Fegley, Kathy Frelich, Dawson Holle, Dwight Kiefert, Carrie McLeod, Todd Porter, Brandon Prichard, Karen M. Rohr, Jayme Davis, and Gretchen Dobervich. All present.

Discussion Topics:

- Effectiveness of conversion therapy
- Mental health
- Therapy for LGBTQ+ members
- Policies on conversion therapy
- Therapy organizations
- Licensed social workers
- Ethical treatments

Representative Prichard introduced HB 1332 with supportive testimony. (#16432)

Parker Lee, North Dakota citizen from Grand Forks, Elizabeth Loos, verbally testified in opposition to bill.

Zara Crystal, North Dakota citizen from Fargo, verbally testified in opposition to bill.

Caedmon Marx, North Dakota citizen, verbally testified in opposition to bill.

Kevin Tangstal, North Dakota citizen, verbally testified in opposition to bill.

Elizabeth Loos, North Dakota Association of Social Workers, testimony in opposition to bill. (#16130)

Mandy Carroll, North Dakota citizen, testimony in opposition to bill. (#15218)

Alison Trainer, NDNASW, verbally testified in opposition to bill.

Dan Sturgill, Clinical Surgeon for Sanford Health in Fargo, North Dakota, verbally testified in opposition to bill.

Mia Halverson, North Dakota citizen and student, verbally testified in opposition to bill.

Gabriela Balf, psychiatrist and citizen from Bismarck, North Dakota, testimony in opposition to bill. (#16078)

Matthew Shurka, National Center for Lesbian Rights and Co-Founder of Born Perfect Campaign, testimony in opposition to bill, (#16135)

Additional written testimony:

14806, 14854, 14900, 14909, 14928, 14944, 14994, 15003, 15030, 15042, 15115, 15159, 15239, 15470, 15532, 15564, 15611, 15624, 15651, 15697, 15707, 15747, 15758, 15766, 15779, 15806, 15816, 15817, 15819, 15850, 15873, 15876, 15883, 15895, 15897, 15907, 15926, 15950, 15970, 15973, 16019, 16029, 16031, 16050, 16055, 16069, 16081, 16142, 16149, 16151, 16161, 16166, 16169, 16184, 16194, 16267,

Chairman Weisz adjourned the meeting at 4:04 PM.

Phillip Jacobs, Committee Clerk By: Leah Kuball

2023 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Human Services Committee Pioneer Room, State Capitol

HB 1332
2/15/2023

Relating to the regulation of social workers.

Chairman Weisz called the meeting to order at 6:25 PM.

Chairman Robin Weisz, Vice Chairman Matthew Ruby, Reps. Karen A. Anderson, Mike Beltz, Clayton Fegley, Kathy Frelich, Dawson Holle, Dwight Kiefert, Carrie McLeod, Todd Porter, Brandon Prichard, Karen M. Rohr, Jayme Davis, and Gretchen Dobervich. All present.

Discussion Topics:

- Committee work
- Amendment (23.0698.03003)
- Conversion therapy
- Social workers
- Preferred sexual orientations.

Representative Prichard proposed an amendment to HB 1332 (23.0698.03003)

Representative Prichard moved to amend HB 1332.

Seconded by Representative Ruby

Roll call vote:

Representatives	Vote
Representative Robin Weisz	Y
Representative Matthew Ruby	Y
Representative Karen A. Anderson	Y
Representative Mike Beltz	Y
Representative Jayme Davis	N
Representative Gretchen Dobervich	N
Representative Clayton Fegley	N
Representative Kathy Frelich	Y
Representative Dawson Holle	Y
Representative Dwight Kiefert	Y
Representative Carrie McLeod	Y
Representative Todd Porter	Y
Representative Brandon Prichard	Y
Representative Karen M. Rohr	Y

Motion carries: 11-3-0

Representative Prichard Moved a DO PASS as amended.

Representative McLeod seconds motion

Roll call vote:

Representatives	Vote
Representative Robin Weisz	N
Representative Matthew Ruby	Y
Representative Karen A. Anderson	Y
Representative Mike Beltz	N
Representative Jayme Davis	N
Representative Gretchen Dobervich	N
Representative Clayton Fegley	N
Representative Kathy Frelich	Y
Representative Dawson Holle	Y
Representative Dwight Kiefert	Y
Representative Carrie McLeod	Y
Representative Todd Porter	N
Representative Brandon Prichard	Y
Representative Karen M. Rohr	Y

Motion carries 8-6-0

Bill carrier: Representative McLeod

Chairman Weisz adjourned the meeting at 6:39 PM

Phillip Jacobs, Committee Clerk By: Leah Kuball

February 15, 2023

JA
2-15-23

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO HOUSE BILL NO. 1332

Page 1, line 7, remove "It is not an ethical violation for a licensee to engage in practices or treatments that"

Page 1, remove line 8

Page 1, line 9, replace "bisexual, transgender, and queer individuals" with "It is not an ethical violation for a licensee to engage in practices or a treatment plan that align with the individual's sex or preference for heterosexual marriage and relationships"

Renumber accordingly

REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE

HB 1332: Human Services Committee (Rep. Weisz, Chairman) recommends **AMENDMENTS AS FOLLOWS** and when so amended, recommends **DO PASS** (8 YEAS, 6 NAYS, 0 ABSENT AND NOT VOTING). HB 1332 was placed on the Sixth order on the calendar.

Page 1, line 7, remove "It is not an ethical violation for a licensee to engage in practices or treatments that"

Page 1, remove line 8

Page 1, line 9, replace "bisexual, transgender, and queer individuals" with "It is not an ethical violation for a licensee to engage in practices or a treatment plan that align with the individual's sex or preference for heterosexual marriage and relationships"

Renumber accordingly

TESTIMONY

HB 1332

House Human Services Committee

I am writing in opposition to HB 1332 dealing with the regulation of social workers as it relates to Conversion Therapy for sexual orientation or gender identity. This bill states that it is not an ethical violation to engage in Conversion Therapy as long as the individual or parents of the individual (in the case of a minor) give consent. All you have to do is some simple research to determine that it is not ethical to engage in this type of reparative therapy as it has been shown over and over to do more harm than good. This type of therapy has been rejected by major medical and mental health organizations for decades and studies have found a significant increase in depression, anxiety, drug use, homelessness and suicide in individuals, especially minors, who are given this type of treatment. Rather than making this type of therapy legal, our state should be joining many others that have laws in place protecting youth from this harmful practice.

Ethical means pertaining to or dealing with morals or the principles of morality: pertaining to right and wrong in conduct. How can it be ethical to allow a treatment that has been shown to be harmful to be used, especially on young people who may not have been able to make the decision on their own? I have read of too many stories of young people who were forced into a reparative therapy program who either committed suicide or became drug users because they felt like they had failed to be good enough.

Please use common sense and give this bill a Do Not Pass vote.

Thank you,

Jane Hirst
Minot, ND

To the people of the committee, my name is Taylor LaVoi, and I oppose bill HB1332. I am going to tell you my story as to why I do not support this bill. As a healthcare provider in this state working on an inpatient psychiatric unit and as an overtly queer person living in this state, of all the bills that are being suggested this one hits the most home for me.

When I came out, I became paralyzed by a severe depression as I realized the love I had in my life from family was conditional. The depression impacted my ability to work as a therapist in healthcare and I needed to leave the field to learn how to stay alive with the void of my family's love.

I spoke with my grandma during this time, one of the people whose conditional love presented itself to me, and you know what she said to me as I told her I was getting involved with therapy? Background information on my grandma, she couldn't even tell you what conversion therapy is, she just has embedded homophobia in her belief system. She said to me, "good I hope you get involved with a straight man that will get you on track." The other things I began to hear was, "on judgment day the choice will be where you go because of this." In addition to, "we are just so heart broken because we wanted to spend forever with you in eternal heaven."

I have invested thousands and thousands of dollars in my mental health to try to understand if as a person that is queer I even deserve to have a place in this world, and if I don't have a place in this world being alive, am I a bad person for who I love which would equate for me to burn in hell? These questions have fueled my depression and caused disabling impacts in my life because there are no answers to these questions. I can feel the onset of my depression coming back into my life merely reading these bills. How can we find this justifiable to support conversion therapy? To say there's one way to love and that all other love needs to burn? How can we truly tell ourselves it's okay to let other people internalize their homophobia to the point where they want to die by suicide because the love they give and receive is bad love?

I refuse to let myself be consumed by these thoughts, and I promise you this, if this bill turns into a law, I will leave this state and I will tell others that the stigma of how the world knows North Dakota is real. This state already is impacted by minimal growth, and if there's a decision to integrate this law specifically, there will be less growth from millennials, gen zs, and the following generations to come.

Who taught you how to love? Do you know if you're doing it right? If you're doing it right, do you think you deserve to burn in hell for the way you love? I hope you're living a life of truth with how you decide to live a life filled with love, the same way I try to live mine.

Thank you for your time, energy, and honoring my story.

WRITTEN TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO HB 1332

House Human Services Committee on House Bill 1332

Date of Hearing: January 24, 2023 10:15 a.m.

Debra L. Hoffarth, 1320 11th Street SW, Minot, ND 58701

This written testimony is presented in opposition to HB 1332, which codifies individuals to subject LGBTQIA+ individuals to conversion therapy. Conversion therapy is an abusive practice. It implies that being LGBTQIA is somehow a mental illness that needs fixing. It is not.

The American Medical Association (AMA)¹ and the American Psychiatric Association (APA)² both oppose conversion therapy. The APA has states: “The potential risks of reparative therapy are great, including depression, anxiety and self-destructive behavior, since therapist alignment with societal prejudices against homosexuality may reinforce self-hatred already experienced by the patient.”³

Failure to be accepted by friends, family, and the community at large increases the risk of suicide in the LGBTQIA+ community, increases the risk of depression, and increase the use of drug and alcohol.

Please stop persecuting the LGBTQIA+ community with laws designed to hurt, not help and oppose HB 1332.

Debra L. Hoffarth
1320 11th Street SW
Minot, ND 58701

¹ *Sexual orientation and gender identity change efforts (so-called “conversion therapy”)* (<https://www.ama-assn.org/system/files/conversion-therapy-issue-brief.pdf>)

² *Position Statement on Conversion Therapy and LGBTQ Patients* (<https://www.psychiatry.org/getattachment/3d23f2f4-1497-4537-b4de-fe32fe8761bf/Position-Conversion-Therapy.pdf>)

³ American Psychiatric Association, *Position Statement on Therapies Focused on Attempts to Change Sexual Orientation (Reparative or Conversion Therapies)* (2000)

Senator Magrum and Representatives: Prichard, Marschall, Rohr, the Rubys, Steiner, and Toman
68th Legislative Assembly of ND

House Bill #1332

Dear Legislators,

I am writing in opposition to HB #1332. I am a parent of a transgender person and as a citizen born and raised in North Dakota.

This legislative body has no idea the harm that this bill would have on transgender people in this state. I state that because of line #6 in the description of HB #1332 that states "Ethics - Caring for Individuals questioning their identity." This bill is anything but caring for transgender people in North Dakota. What HB #1332 does is it strikes fear in transgender people and also gives others the false idea that transgender people are confused and it is the duty of "others" to correct the transgender persons thinking of themselves. This bill, HB #1332, lacks any knowledge of what it is to be transgender as well as any empathy, sympathy or consideration for what the transgender person is going through nor the mental stress and anguish this would inflict on this innocent person who is just trying to live their authentic self.

I do NOT think the Legislators who proposed this bill, HB #1332, have any thought of the transgender person living in North Dakota but the Legislators are reacting to fear, false narratives spun by news media such as FOX News, what's been seen and read on social media such as Facebook, and what the radical religious right have touted as facts, which is not the case. Legislators need to look at this bill with what the science from medical doctors, what counselors who specialize in transgender care and more importantly the transgender community has to say about conversion therapy.

Conversion Therapy is inhumane and cruel. To take a person whom is just trying to live a life that allows themselves to be whole and tell that person that they are ill or mentally confused. To have that person be badgered, tortured by others who tell them that their ideas of self is wrong and that society won't accept them as whom they say they are but to become someone they aren't is not only abusive but terrorizing to the transgender person. This is a use of force that most definitely needs to be outlawed. No one has the right to tell someone that they are not who they say they are. How would you like to be taken against your will and told you are no longer who you are but the opposite gender? That you're confused and must be made to think differently, and you won't be able to leave until your thinking is in line with what others think? Does that sound like ethical care for individuals questioning their identity? It certainly does not sound like anything remotely close to care for anyone let alone therapy care.

As a parent of a transgender person I find it appalling that the legislators believe it is their responsibility to oversee transgender care when these same individuals know nothing about transgender people and their struggles just to live a life that the CIS community takes for

granted. How many of you talked to a transgender person? How many of you have discussed with a parent of a transgender person what this bill, HB #1332 would do to their child and family? I dare say none of you have spoken with any transgender person nor their parents.

This bill was formed to do one thing and one thing only, to eliminate transgender people from North Dakota. It is so unbelievable how the group who authored and supported this bill have not learned anything from history. This bill, HB #1332, smacks of what Hitler did to the Jews. To eliminate someone whom the authors and supporters of HB #1332 deem as a threat to themselves and must be erased from existence. Isn't that what Hitler did? How well did that work? Is that your vision for the future of North Dakota? To start producing bills outlawing people who are different from you? If this bill is successful who then would you focus on next, gays and lesbians? Is your long-term goal to rid everyone of different race, color, ethnic and sexual orientation from North Dakota so North Dakota would be an Aryan State?

Conversion Therapy doesn't work. What Conversion Therapy does do is traumatize people. It's harmful and dehumanizing. Religious radicals that believe that Conversion Therapy works are telling their followers a false narrative. These lies are harmful and hurt people; do damage to a person's sense of who they can trust and can even push someone to self-harm if not worse. Do you legislators want that on your conscious?

I strongly encourage you to talk to a transgender person or their parents. The knowledge and insight you will gain will not only be enlightening but also valuable to you as this world is not as black and white as you think but full of all different colors and shades, just as God intended. We are not all identical with one another and that's good because God intended this world to be filled with people who are different, so we have the opportunity to learn from one another and accept each other and our differences.

I strongly encourage you to vote: DO NOT PASS on HB #1332.
Thank you,
Kristie Miller
Parent of a Transgender Child and Citizen of North Dakota

HB #1332

Senator Magrum and Representatives: Prichard, Marschall, Rohr, the Rubys,
Steiner, and Toman
68th Legislative Assembly of ND

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I strongly encourage you to vote: DO NOT PASS on HB #1332.
Thank you,
Kristie Miller
Parent of a Transgender Child and Citizen of North Dakota

HB #1332

Elia Jay Scott,
Fargo, ND 58103 (district 46).

Please stop the war on trans lives.

Imagine (if you are not) that you are Catholic. And imagine that your state legislature proposes **21 bills** targeting, demonizing, and persecuting the Catholic community. One bans you from wearing a crucifix in public. One bans you from privately praying anywhere near a school. And one bans sale of alcohol for religious purposes, making it illegal for your church to obtain the spiritual medicine that keeps your soul alive, the Eucharist.

Now, instead, imagine that you are **transgender**. Instead of banning crucifixes, the state wants to ban you from going outside your house in clothes consistent with your identity. Instead of banning prayer in schools, they want to ban any school accommodation for your condition, gender dysphoria. And instead of banning the Eucharist, they want to ban the evidence-based, lifesaving healthcare that has saved your **actual, physical life**, and the lives of so many of your beloved friends.

That is what the North Dakota state legislature is doing right now. Republicans have introduced 21 – yes, 21 – bills, targeting, demonizing, and persecuting the transgender community, doing all I have described above and more.

This bill, HB 1332, exists for no other purpose but to make it legal for quack-doctors to physically and psychologically torture trans people to try to make them cisgender – something which is scientifically impossible. In fact, the true goal of conversion “therapy” is to terrorize trans people into repressing and hiding themselves in the closet, or killing themselves – a disturbingly frequent outcome of this kind of abuse. It is an affront to humanity, to allow this disgusting practice.

Chair and members of the committee, if you are Catholic, Christian, or simply a human being of conscience, I ask you ***please to vote NO on all these anti-transgender bills***, and to stop this merciless, hateful war on our trans neighbors – whom, if we are Catholic, Christian, or people of conscience, we are commanded by God and human decency ***to love as ourselves***.

†

As a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist in North Dakota, I urge you to oppose HB 1332.

I graduated from NDSU's Couple and Family Therapy program with a Master of Science in 2009. My thesis project was on the Ethics of Conversion Therapy. A copy still resides in the library on NDSU's campus.

The Social Work Licensure Board should be allowed to be the experts in their field. The legislature should not create laws trying to supersede the Administrative Rule process. There is no robust evidence supporting the efficacy of conversion therapy, and a plethora of evidence of its harm. The Social Work Licensure board made the right call to ban the practice.

The practice of conversion therapy is so harmful many states have laws making the practice illegal. California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, Utah, Virginia, Vermont, Washington, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico all have laws or regulations protecting youth from this harmful practice. Eight of these state laws or regulations were enacted under Republican governors.

Many professional organizations have made statements explicitly against conversion therapy including:

The American Academy of Pediatrics
The American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy
American College of Physicians
American Counseling Association
American Medical Association
American Psychiatric Association
American Psychoanalytic Association
American Psychological Association
American School Counselor Association
American School Health Association
National Association of Social Workers
Just the Facts Coalition
World Psychiatric Association
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

I don't think the authors of this bill know what conversion therapy entails and how harmful it can be. Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual people who have undergone conversion therapy are almost twice as likely to attempt suicide than those who did not participate in conversion therapy. It's 92% higher over the course of their lifetime. Many report years of trauma therapy after conversion therapy experiences.

This is not a bill that recognizes or appreciates a diverse population of North Dakotans and will result in loss of community members. It does not make North Dakota a desirable place to

live and is not reflective of the values that most North Dakotans hold toward their friends, neighbors and family members.

I strongly urge you to oppose HB 1332.

Dear Chair Weisz and members of the House Human Services Committee,

My testimony is in opposition to House Bill 1332. I ask that you give this bill a Do Not Pass.

I am an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ and a resident of Clay County, Minnesota. Members of my church reside in North Dakota. In 2021 my denomination passed a resolution calling on clergy and congregations to condemn conversion therapy.

A "Williams Institute" report from "(June 15, 2020)," found that" LGBTQ+ people who were subjected to conversion therapy have shown a greater risk of suicidal thoughts and attempted suicide

- 92% greater odds of lifetime suicidal ideation,
- 88% greater odds of attempting suicide,

The consensus of the mental health care profession was summed up in the "Position Statement on Attempts to Change Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, or Gender Expression" released by the American Psychoanalytic Association in 2012. They found: "Psychoanalytic technique does not ... "convert," "repair," change or shift an individual's sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. Such directed efforts are against fundamental principles of psychoanalytic treatment."

In short, conversation therapy is both harmful to mental health and against mental health care professional standards.

My faith and my experience of God as the energy of love, calls me to speak against this bill, against conversion therapy. My study of the two testaments of the Christian bible show me that neither God, nor the bible, condemns same gender loving and gender expansive people. A review of the healing stories of Jesus shows that people left his treatment whole, not 92% more broken.

HB1332 threatens the most vulnerable among us, minors and vulnerable adults, those for whom the law appoints guardians. If a type of cast or splint increased limb amputation by 92%, we would ban the use of the cast or splint. Continuing to use it would be criminal.

That is the point we are at with conversion therapy. The practice is harmful, barbaric even. Professionals in the field say it is a violation of ethics. Studies show that 92% of people who receive this treatment are harmed by it. It is time for the State of North Dakota to prevent this practice.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and service to our state

Best regards,

Rev. Michelle Webber

I strongly oppose this bill. Conversion therapy is incredibly harmful. I have provided therapy services to several individuals who were unlucky enough to be put through conversion therapy as adolescents. Each of them described their experience as extremely distressing and traumatic. In fact, much of my work with these individuals was trying to help them work through the trauma of their conversion therapy experience.

As a therapist, I can confidently say that conversion therapy absolutely should be unethical. My ethical board (American Counseling Association) requires that I never do anything that could be harmful to a client. Conversion therapy is, without a doubt, harmful to clients.

The fact that this bill is being considered is embarrassing for our state. It shows such ignorance of factual information and the extreme prejudice of our lawmakers. Furthermore, passing this law would make our state undesirable for therapists. Who wants to come to a state where the law directly contradicts their code of ethics?

Megan Degenstein, Ph.D.
Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor

DEAN BANKS

HB 1332

IT IS NOT UNETHICAL TO BE COMFORTABLE IN MY OWN BODY. SOME PEOPLE ARE BORN WITH A DYSPHORIA ABOUT THEIR BIRTH SEX. IT IS NOT WRONG TO ASK TO BE CALLED THEIR PREFERRED GENDER. IT DOESN'T MATTER IF THE REPRODUCTIVE ORGANS ARE INSIDE OR OUTSIDE YOU. WE ARE ALL HUMAN, I CAN BE COMFORTABLE IN MY OWN SKIN IF I WANT TO!

For example I got sex trafficked from the ages of 3-15. I was born female but they physically altered my gender during the time. I am going to be forced to be identified as male, because I look male, if all these bills are going the way they are headed. I do not wish to be gendered by how I look or how I act. I wish to be able to ask someone to call me by my preferred pronouns and have the respect I request.

January 22, 2023

To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Tim Baumann and I live at 1308 35th Ave. SW in Minot. I am writing today to express my opposition to HB 1332. The ethical nature of medical practices should be decided by medical professionals. If they say that an action is unethical, we should listen to them.

Respectfully Submitted,

Tim Baumann

1308 35th Ave. SW

Minot, ND 58701

Sixty-eighth
Legislative Assembly
of North Dakota

To whom it may concern,

I am writing this letter in opposition to the House bill #1332.

Any type of conversion therapy is considered unethical, and inhumane- and goes against more than one of the National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics which you can find here:

[Code of Ethics: English \(socialworkers.org\)](http://socialworkers.org)

Specifically I find that it is against the Value of: **Dignity and Worth of the Person** – which has the Ethical Principle of: Social workers respect the inherent dignity and worth of the person. “Social workers treat each person in a caring and respectful fashion, mindful of individual differences and cultural and ethnic diversity. Social workers promote clients’ socially responsible self-determination. Social workers seek to enhance clients’ capacity and opportunity to change and to address their own needs.”

I would also love to take this opportunity to ask each and every one of you to reflect on how the LGBTQ community is actually harming anyone- reflect on your own homophobia for there to be such a witch hunt in this and other upcoming bill proposals.

Thank you,

Sydney Glende, MS, LBSW, LPCC

1/24/2023

Dear Chairman Weisz and Members of the Human Services Committee.

My name is Mandi Carroll. I am testifying as a private citizen from District 40 and I would like to thank you for your tireless service to the people of North Dakota during the legislative session.

The Air Force brought me to North Dakota in 2007 as an Air Force spouse and Air Force veteran. I owned a successful photography business under my name in Minot for 13 years but recently retired that business to attend the Minot State social work program. I am currently completing my internship with High Plains Fair Housing Center. I am an active member of the ND chapter of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) and serve there on numerous boards. Additionally, I have served on the board of the Taube Art Museum since 2016, including serving four years as board president. Our family has been active in our community with volunteerism in and outside the church, both in Minot and Grand Forks, since moving to North Dakota.

Today, I am asking for a DO NOT PASS ON HB 1332. In May 2015, the NASW released its position statement about Sexual Orientation Change Efforts (SOCE) and Conversion Therapy with Lesbians, Gay Men, Bisexuals, and Transgender Persons. I highly recommend that you read it, and I have taken the liberty of printing off a copy for each of you on the committee.

In case you do not get a chance to read it before voting on this legislation, I will recap some vital portions:

First - In discussing ethical decisions for social work practice, it is stressed that "the priority of professional intervention at the individual level will be to help people achieve self-actualization, rather than helping them to learn how to adjust to the existing social order."

Second - the practice of conversion therapy violates the very tenets of the social work profession as outlined in the NASW *Code of Ethics*. For brevity, I will ask you to refer to the materials presented.

Third - Social workers must advocate against a policy or practice interventions that create or reinforce prejudice and discrimination towards gay men, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgender persons and their families.

Finally – You will hear, in detail, today from the NASW ND executive director about how this bill violates our ethics, so I will just take this opportunity to, again, highlight that the NASW put out specific guidance for this exact practice, opposing it for any uses.

My outstanding professors at Minot State University remind me that a good social worker must follow the best-informed and evidence-based practices. We are also reminded that if we violate the National Association of Social Workers' code of ethics, we could and likely will lose our

license to practice. Even if this bill is passed, it would still be unethical for social workers to practice “conversion therapy.”

I took the liberty of looking at the professions of this bill's sponsors. The professions include legal assistant, owner of an excavating and plumbing business, pub owner & retired military, president of a landfill, National Guard member, real estate owner and agent, and information systems for Ducks Unlimited. Of course, this does not give you the sum of their professional backgrounds. Still, there is no other human service professional sponsoring this bill other than Representative Rohr, who is a nurse practitioner. For your information, the American Academy of Nursing also has a policy statement about the unethical practice of conversion therapy. I have linked it in my written testimony.

Now imagine you are standing where I stand, trying to defend the best policies for your workplace. I suspect there is not one of you who would agree that legislators who have no background in your industry are best suited to make decisions about that industry. I especially anticipate this would be so in the case of a practice that has been shown to be wholly ineffective and incredibly harmful. These facts are supported by decades of research and evidence, yet you are asked to disregard them without refuting evidence.

I mean this with absolute respect. No one can know about everything. In fact, as a 47-year-old woman in college, I continue to realize just how much I do *not* know. Thankfully we have experts to consult who have compiled their data using peer-reviewed, evidence-based studies.

Thank you again for your commitment to serving individuals in your community. I urge you to look at the research about efficacy and damage to already potentially fragile individuals, and please vote DO NOT PASS ON HB 1332.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Mandi Carroll

Minot, ND

American Academy of Nursing on Policy

American Academy of Nursing position statement on reparative therapy

[https://www.nursingoutlook.org/article/S0029-6554\(15\)00125-6/pdf](https://www.nursingoutlook.org/article/S0029-6554(15)00125-6/pdf)

Dear Chair Weisz and members of the House Human Services Committee,

My testimony is in opposition to House Bill 1332. I ask that you give this bill a Do Not Pass.

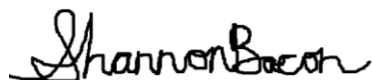
Through my training and experience as a Licensed Social Worker, I am confident in stating that any practices or treatments attempting to change sexual orientation or gender identity among lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) individuals are both unethical and deeply harmful. I stand in full support of the LGBTQ+ community.

Regardless of your personal stance on LGBTQ+ identities, please consider the life and death ramifications of this bill. The harms of conversion therapies are well documented. In comparison to LGBTQ+ youth who receive acceptance and support, those who receive conversion therapy are eight times as likely to have attempted suicide, six times as likely to report high levels of depression, and three times as likely to use illegal drugs. If you believe in suicide prevention, if you believe in reducing the risks of substance abuse and drug overdose, you must, in good conscious, reject this bill.

The professional and scientific evidence is clear – experts agree that conversion therapy does not work, and in fact is harmful to LGBTQ+ people. My professional association, the National Association of Social Workers, understands the harms of any therapy or intervention claiming to change a client’s gender identity or sexual orientation. Many professional organizations agree, including the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Counseling Association, the American School Counselor Association, Mental Health America, the National Association of School Psychologists, [and others](#).

Please prioritize the life and health of your constituents, as well as professional ethics of licensed providers across our state, and give this bill a Do Not Pass.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Shannon Bacon". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Shannon Bacon, LSW, MSW

Fargo, ND

I knew that I was different from a very young age. Growing up in Texas with immigrant parents & in a poor immigrant community, my perspective of the world was limited. The first time I kissed a girl, we were hidden in her closet at midnight, scared of being found by her parents. It was a beautiful & deeply sad moment. A memory that should be cute and awkward and funny is tainted forever because of it was clouded by our terror of being found out to be “wrong”. We weren’t wrong.

I’m a fantastic actor. My greatest performance, to date, was convincing those around me that I was heterosexual & cisgender. I hid my feelings, my personhood, & my joy for over a decade. When I learned the word transgender, after I had spent my whole life convinced that I was completely alone, I was beside myself with grief over my life so far & utter joy at the life I now had the chance to start living. My family didn’t accept that I wasn’t their daughter. I attempted suicide multiple times. One attempt landed me in a medically induced coma. When I woke up, to the surprise of even my doctors, my family told me how happy they were that their “little girl” came back to them. I kept trying to kill myself, I ran away from home, my parents threw me out & my guardians in North Dakota took me in. They didn’t accept me either, so I went back to acting.

Three years later, at 18, I was homeless, traumatized from years of abuse, & **still transgender**. No beating took it out of me, no vitriolic words could stem who I was, lack of support couldn’t make me a different person. Now that I have transitioned socially, medically, & legally, I am three years free from a suicide attempt, two years sober, & finally at home within myself. I have friends. I have a place to live. I have pets. I am alive & happy to be so.

The attack on transgender rights all across the country will not stop people from being transgender. Centuries of history have shown, time and time again, from book burnings to murders to genocides, that transgender people cannot be subdued into nonexistence. Even if every single transgender person were to die tomorrow, more would be born the next day. The outcome of bills like these is that transgender people are made to suffer more for existing, suicide rates of transgender people increase dramatically, & the murders of transgender people are normalized.

The Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention has classified the actions of lawmakers within the GOP against the LGBTQ+ community as a movement driven by fascistic, genocidal ideology. Transgender people, whether adults or children, deserve the freedom to identify as themselves & to seek treatments that are deemed appropriate by World Health Organization, the World Professional Association for Transgender Health, & other unbiased medical organizations that rely on science to determine the proven safest treatments that lead to the proven best outcomes for people. Transgender people do not pose **any** risk to non-transgender people. Transgender people, very simply, wish to live our lives, as ourselves, in peace.

Conversion therapy has been shown to be an abusive practice that **DOES NOT WORK**. The push to legalize it is simply due to the horrific want to abuse LGBTQ+ people.

Testimony to the House Human Services Committee

From: Alison Traynor, MSW, MPH, LCSW

RE: House Bill No. 1332

January 24, 2023

Chairman Weisz and House Human Services Committee members, thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony in opposition to House Bill 1332. My name is Alison Traynor. I am the President of North Dakota's Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers, but I submit this testimony as an individual Licensed Clinical Social Worker. I have fourteen years of experience serving North Dakota youth and adults, specializing in suicide prevention. Members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ+) community are disproportionately represented among the clients I serve because they are four times more likely to have contemplated suicide than the general population (Johns et al., 2019; Johns et al., 2020). This increased risk of suicide among LGBTQ+ youth is not due to their sexual orientation or their gender identity, but rather the result of internalized abuse. Conversion therapy is one form of mistreatment shown to increase suicide risk. The practice is based on the belief that homosexuality is a mental illness requiring treatment. This premise has been invalidated by the American Psychiatric Association and their written Diagnostic Statistics Manual (the manual that all mental health providers use for both diagnosis and treatment). The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention aptly describes my experience of clients who have been subjected to these practices "Conversion therapy has been found to interrupt healthy identity development, create mistrust of mental health professionals, and deteriorate relationships with family, all of which can be especially detrimental to children and adolescents. [Ensuring that young people are not

subjected to] conversion therapy protects youth and reduces suicide risk. It is vital to hold professionals, such as licensed social workers accountable and require that they follow an ethical code, including the prohibition of services with no scientific basis.” According to the Generations Study funded by the National Institute of Health, members of the LGBTQ+ community who experienced conversion therapy were nearly twice as likely to think about suicide and to attempt suicide compared to their peers who hadn’t experienced conversion therapy.

In North Dakota, we are experiencing a public health crisis. Suicide is the second leading cause of death among youth ages ten to twenty-four and North Dakota’s suicide rate is increasing. According to the CDC, in 2020, the suicide rate in North Dakota was 18.1 people per 100,000, compared to 13.5 people per 100,000 across the United States. The Centers for Disease Prevention and Control (CDC) Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and Suicide Prevention Resource Center (SPRC) recommend evidence-based interventions tailored to high-risk populations such as LGBTQ+ as part of their comprehensive approach to suicide prevention. The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention have strong positions against Conversion Therapy. House Bill 1332 undermines the recommendations of these key suicide prevention stakeholders and North Dakota’s effort to save lives from suicide.

There is broad consensus among mental health and medical communities that conversion therapy is dangerous. In 2016, Cornell University summarized forty-seven research studies concluding that conversion therapy is ineffective and harmful. Unfortunately, the pain and shame associated with these experiences make it even more difficult for youth and adults who have experienced conversion therapy to come forward to provide their personal testimony. As a social worker, I

have an ethical responsibility to advocate for my clients. It is on behalf of my clients that I share that conversion therapy hurts kids and families in North Dakota.

Lastly, the North Dakota Board of Social Work Examiners, whose members are appointed by Governor Burgum included language in their 2021 update to their administrative rules that conversion therapy is an unethical practice. House Bill 1332 undermines this Governor-appointed board of professional social workers and its process.

Mr. Chairman and Committee members, for these reasons, I urge a Do Not Pass recommendation on House Bill 1332.

Dear Chair Weisz and members of the House Human Services Committee,

My testimony is in opposition to House Bill 1249. I ask that you give this bill a Do Not Pass.

The reason for this is that I am against bills that endorse discrimination as policy. This bill hurts our state as it intrudes on individual liberties and causes actual harm to LGBTQ+ people in North Dakota, contributing to higher suicide rates among LGBTQ+ youth and mass exodus of youth from our state whether they are LGBTQ or not.

Among queer youth in North Dakota:

- 74.7% Have ever seriously considered suicide (Middle School Data)
- 46.3% Have ever attempted suicide (Middle School Data)
- 94.4% Do not talk to parents when feeling sad, empty, hopeless, or angry (High School Data)
- 72.7% Didn't feel safe at school most of time or always (High School Data)
- 61.0% Bullied on School Property (Middle School Data)
- 27.0% Didn't Sleep in Parents Home + 20.0% Have Run away or homeless (High School)

Thank you for your time, consideration, and service to our state

Best regards,

Kaitlyn Kelly

Dear Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

My testimony is in opposition

to Senate Bill 1332. I ask that you give this bill a **Do Not Pass**.

I am finishing up my Bachelors in Social Work degree this year and I have learned a lot about how Social Workers need to respect the people they are helping. There is absolutely no way I would ever do reparative therapy in my future practice as it is morally and ethically wrong. Reparative therapy is harmful to people and inhumane.

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) explicitly talks about the importance of respecting the dignity and worth of the person. This means that social workers will be mindful of cultural differences including a persons sexual orientation. Attempting to change a persons sexual orientation is ethically wrong and does not go along with the Social Work standards put forth by the NASW. <https://www.socialworkers.org/About/Ethics/Code-of-Ethics/Code-of-Ethics-English>

Please,

consider not passing this dangerous piece of legislation, vote **DO NOT PASS**

Thank you for your time,

consideration, and service to our state

Best regards,

Becky Craigo

President of Beach Pride Family; House of Safe Spaces

Beach North Dakota

TESTIMONY on HB 1332
from the
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS—NORTH DAKOTA CHAPTER
to the
ND House Human Services Committee
January 24, 2023

Chairman Weisz and members of the House Human Services Committee:

The Board of Directors and Advocacy Committee of the NASW-ND submit this testimony in opposition to House Bill 1332. We appreciate the opportunity to share our perspective.

The North Dakota Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW-ND) is a membership association representing social workers in the state of North Dakota. The mission of NASW-ND is to strengthen and protect the practice of social work in North Dakota and to advance sound and equitable social policy. Our opposition to HB 1332 is solidly grounded in our organization’s mission.

NASW-ND strongly opposes HB 1332 for the following reasons:

1. In 2021, the ND Board of Social Work Examiners added the following language to Administrative Code 75.5-02-06.1-01: “... *it is a violation of the code of ethics for a social worker licensed by the board to engage in any practices or treatments that attempt to change or repair...sexual orientation or gender identity...*”¹ [i.e., “conversion or reparative therapies”].

HB 1332 asserts that it is ***not*** an ethical violation for social workers to engage in the pseudotherapy commonly called “conversion therapy” or “reparative therapy.” Since none of the sponsors of the bill are social workers (according to their legislative biographies), they are presuming to know and understand the nature and standards of ethical social work practice. They are wrong in their presumption. **It *is* an ethical violation for licensed social workers to engage in “conversion or reparative therapies” for the following reasons:**

- a. ***“Conversion or reparative therapy” is an ineffective pseudotherapy.*** Peer reviewed studies indicate that there is no credible evidence that “conversion therapies” are effective in changing sexual orientation.² Given the evidence against the efficacy of “conversion therapies,” if licensed social workers practice “conversion therapies,” they may be held legally liable for its ineffectiveness given that “conversion therapies” violate the social work profession’s code of ethics and standard of care (because these “therapies” are ineffective and harmful). HB 1332 essentially asks social workers to ignore their profession’s ethical and clinical standards of practice.
 - b. ***“Conversion or reparative therapy” is a dangerous pseudotherapy.*** Valid and reliable studies show that “conversion therapies” are actually harmful, demonstrating an association between the experience of “conversion therapy” and adverse health effects such as anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation, and suicide attempts.^{3, 4}
 - c. ***“Conversion or reparative therapy” is a discredited pseudotherapy.*** The National Association of Social Workers was one of the first mental health associations to condemn this discredited activity. All major U.S. mental health and medical associations including, but not limited to, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Medical Association, the American Psychiatric Association, and the American Psychological Association publicly recognize the dangers of sexual orientation and gender identity change efforts.^{5, 6}
2. **HB 1332 is an attack on the education, judgment, and practice of licensed professional social workers in North Dakota.** Trained, licensed, and experienced social workers, not legislators, are best able to determine the nature of effective and ethical social work practice. The North Dakota Board of Social Work Examiners and the North Dakota Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers both acknowledge the dangerous and unethical nature of “conversion or reparative therapy” and both consider it unethical social work practice.
 3. **HB 1332 countermands the legislative rulemaking process.** The bill will overturn a portion of North Dakota [Administrative Code 75.5-02-06.1-01](#). On June 8, 2021, testimony was given by the ND Board of Social Work Examiners to the ND Legislative Rules Committee in support of this section of the Administrative Code. On that day, a majority of the Administrative Rules Committee voted in favor of this

Administrative Code section. This bill to make an “end run” around the Administrative Rules Committee undermines the orderly function and credibility of the legislative process itself.

The NASW-ND respectfully requests that members of the House Human Services Committee vote Do Not Pass on this bill.

Testimony submitted by Amy Phillips, MSSW, MDiv, PhD, Vice President, Board of Directors NASW-ND, and member, NASW-ND Advocacy Committee
kaphillip@gmail.com

Notes:

¹ [Code of Ethics](#)

² [Research on "conversion therapies"](#)

³ [Summary of findings on "conversion therapy"](#)

⁴ [Ending "Conversion Therapy"](#)

⁵ [Lies and Dangers of "Reparative Therapy"](#)

⁶ [American Psychological Association](#); [American Psychiatric Association](#)

Available research does not support the use of conversion therapy as an effective method in the treatment of LGBT persons. Evidence shows that the practice may cause emotional or physical harm to these individuals, particularly adolescents or young persons

Conversion Therapy has consistently been debunked by the scientific community and is considered a pseudoscience. Sexual orientation cannot be changed. Many wish it could be, particularly those who are gay and their

families. Because being LGBT is not a choice, preference or lifestyle. Efforts to change orientation are cruel. Conversion therapy creates false hope, and research shows an increase of depression among its subjects.

If people view conversion therapy as a viable option, when it doesn't work, families as well as society at large becomes even less tolerant and rejection increases.

Twenty states and the District of Columbia have passed legislation which prohibits state licensed mental health practitioners from the use of conversion therapy with LGBT youth.

A number of prominent national professional health associations have made public statements opposing the use of conversion therapy because it is harmful and ineffective. These include the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, the American Medical Association, the American Psychological Association, the National Association of Social Workers and numerous others.

Several of these associations have called on Congress and state legislatures to pass laws that ban conversion therapy and have endorsed the Therapeutic Fraud Prevention Act, a federal bill that would have prohibited the practice of conversion therapy, including the National Association of School Psychologists, the American Psychoanalytic Association, the American Counseling Association, and the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Please read the following public statements by some of these organizations regarding this unacceptable and harmful practice.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: maintains that being LGBTQ+ is not a mental disorder, points to lack of evidence that change efforts can alter sexual orientation or gender and considers change efforts inappropriate. Further, the statement warns that change efforts may be harmful.

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry "The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry finds no evidence to support the application of any therapeutic intervention operating under the premise that a specific sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or gender expression is pathological. Furthermore, based on the scientific evidence, the AACAP asserts that such conversion therapies (or other interventions imposed with the intent of promoting a particular sexual orientation and/or gender as a preferred outcome) lack scientific credibility and clinical utility. Additionally, there is evidence that such interventions are harmful. As a result, conversion therapies should not be part of any behavioral health treatment of children and adolescents."

American Academy of Pediatrics Therapy directed at specifically changing sexual orientation is contraindicated, since it can provoke guilt and anxiety while having little or no potential for achieving changes in orientation.

American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy, [T]he association does not consider homosexuality a disorder that requires treatment, and as such, we see no basis for [reparative therapy]. AAMFT expects its members to practice based on the best research and clinical evidence available.

American College of Physicians The College opposes the use of conversion, reorientation, or reparative therapy for the treatment of LGBT persons. The belief that sexual orientation can be changed can only increase the probability of rejection by families and society at large, increasing the likelihood of depression, substance abuse and suicide.

American Counseling Association The Ethics Committee strongly suggests that ethical professional counselors do not refer clients to someone who engages in conversion therapy or, if they do so, to proceed cautiously only when they

are certain that the referral counselor fully informs clients of the unproven nature of the treatment and the potential risks and takes steps to minimize harm to clients. . . . This information also must be included in written informed consent material by those counselors who offer conversion therapy despite ACAs position and the Ethics Committees statement in opposition to the treatment. To do otherwise violates the spirit and specifics of the ACA Code of Ethics.

American Medical Association Aversion therapy (a behavioral or medical intervention which pairs unwanted behavior, in this case, homosexual behavior, with unpleasant sensations or aversive consequences) is no longer recommended for gay men and lesbians. Through psychotherapy, gay men and lesbians can become comfortable with their sexual orientation and understand the societal response to it.

American Psychiatric Association Psychotherapeutic modalities to convert or repair homosexuality are based on developmental theories whose scientific validity is questionable. Furthermore, anecdotal reports of cures are counterbalanced by anecdotal claims of psychological harm. In the last four decades, reparative therapists have not produced any rigorous scientific research to substantiate their claims of cure. Until there is such research available , [the American Psychiatric Association] recommends that ethical practitioners refrain from attempts to change individuals sexual orientation, keeping in mind the medical dictum to first, do no harm.

The potential risks of reparative therapy are great, including depression, anxiety and self-destructive behavior, since therapist alignment with societal prejudices against homosexuality may reinforce self-hatred already experienced by the patient. Many patients who have undergone reparative therapy relate

Therefore, the American Psychiatric Association opposes any psychiatric treatment such as reparative or conversion therapy which is based upon the assumption that homosexuality per se is a mental disorder or based upon the a priori assumption that a patient should change his/her sexual homosexual orientation.

The American Psychological Association reaffirms its position that homosexuality per se is not a mental disorder and opposes portrayals of sexual minority youths and adults as mentally ill due to their sexual orientation;

Be it further resolved that the American Psychological Association concludes that there is insufficient evidence to support the use of psychological interventions to change sexual orientation;

Be it further resolved that the American Psychological Association encourages mental health professionals to avoid misrepresenting the efficacy of sexual orientation change efforts by promoting or promising change in sexual orientation when providing assistance to individuals distressed by their own or others sexual orientation.

Be it further resolved that the American Psychological Association advises parents, guardians, young people, and their families to avoid sexual orientation change efforts that portray homosexuality as a mental illness or developmental disorder and to seek psychotherapy, social support and educational services that provide accurate information on sexual orientation and sexuality, increase family and school support, and reduce rejection of sexual minority youth.

<http://www.apa.org/pi/lgbt/resources/just-the-facts.pdf>.

National Association of Social Workers, Taken to the extreme, homophobia in social workers and other practitioners can lead to the use of conversion or reparative therapies, which are explicitly condemned by NASW.

. NASW reaffirms its stance against reparative therapies and treatments designed to change sexual orientation or to refer practitioners or programs that claim to do so.

I am grateful to have an opportunity to submit this information and I am hopeful the information I have included it assists in legislative decision making for our state.

Policy should be dictated by research, not personal belief systems or ideas that seem intuitively right. The citizens of North Dakota should feel assured that legislative topics are well researched, and our elected officials are willing to take the time to seriously address any and all feedback.

Martha Dille, Licensed Psychologist
Fargo, North Dakota

January 23, 2023

Chairperson Lee and Committee Members,

I strongly urge a Do NOT Pass on HB 1332. The National Association of Social Workers, the largest professional organization of social workers in the United States, has since 2014 condemned the use of sexual orientation change efforts by any person identifying as a social worker and any agency claiming to provide social work services (www.socialworkers.org). How can we hope to recruit and retain qualified social workers in North Dakota when our state laws go against their professional standards and code of ethics? This legislation will further tarnish the image of North Dakota as we try to recruit and retain qualified individuals for our workforce.

I urge a Do NOT Pass on HB 1332.

Sincerely,
Sylvia Bull
522 N 16th St
Bismarck, ND 58501

HB 1332 seeks to codify conversion therapy as legal and ethical, and in so doing, to override YEAR AND YEARS of science and studies which prove that trying to change or repair someones sexual identity does far, far more harm than good. The state has NO RIGHT to insert itself into the healthcare of these individuals and declare something KNOWN to cause harm and hurt to LGBTQIA+ individuals as ETHICAL behavior in a field that should, by all rights, be prioritizing the welfare of children above all else!

This is an OUTRAGEOUS overreach by the state legislature and government. How DARE the state try to overrule the board and body which regulates social workers and so flagrantly dismiss all evidence to the contrary in pursuit of political gain and bigoted grandstanding.

The legislature cannot simply WILL the science into agreeing with them, nor should it be permitted to make laws which fly in the face of reality as determined by the experts of their respective fields.

North Dakota already has a hard enough time retaining its talent and workforce, and a law like this would drive out social workers and therapists who could not in good conscience continue to serve in a state which seeks to codify the denial of both science and reason. Worse, explicitly protecting the right of parents to impose conversion therapy on their children will GREATLY increase the risk of suicide among an already struggling and suffering demographic.

This bill seeks to use social workers to perpetuate abuse and continued endangerment of children WITH THE ENCOURAGEMENT AND BACKING of the state, and by no means should the committee even consider supporting it. SAVE A CHILDS LIFE, AND DO NOT PASS HB 1332.

Dear Chair and members of the Human Services Committee,

My testimony is in opposition to House Bill 1332. I ask that you give this bill a Do Not Pass.

I believe this bill is an unnecessary overstep of individual freedoms and right to free expression. Gender conversion therapy is pseudo-scientific; I defer to medical and psychiatric testimony for further explanation to the committee.

House Bill 1332 potentially opens up a pandora's box of harm to valued and important members of our state. It further denigrates and assumes by it's nature that there is something medically and or psychiatrically problematic with the 'patient's' sexuality or perception of self.

Thank you for your time and consideration of my position. Thank you also for your generous and dedicated service to our great state.

Best Regard,

Michael J. Southam

Dear Chair Weisz and members of the House Human Services Committee,

I am writing in strong opposition to House Bill 1332. I ask that you give this bill a Do Not Pass. As a licensed psychologist in North Dakota, I must urge you to look at the scientific evidence of the harm that conversion therapy has traditionally caused many individuals who willingly or unwillingly were subjected to it. Scientific studies have found conversion therapy to have negative effects associated with it including increased levels of depression, substance use, social thoughts, and suicide attempts. Furthermore, there is no rigorous scientific evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of conversion therapy. In modern psychology and mental health practices, conversion therapy is seen as unethical and harmful. Several major health organizations have made statements against the use of conversion therapy including the American Medical Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Psychological Association, the American Psychiatric Association, the National Association of Social Workers, and more.

In medical practice, our first duty is to do no harm. Conversion therapy does just that. It causes harm. I strongly encourage you to vote do not pass on this bill. Our community deserves just, scientifically backed care.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Dena Wanner-Perry

Licensed Psychologist, ND and MN

As a mother of a transgender teen in the North Dakota, I strongly oppose HB 1332. “[P]ractices or treatments that attempt to change or repair the sexual orientation or gender identity of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer individuals” are horribly unethical. This is not who we are as North Dakotans. Please do not support this legislation and allow these harmful practices to impact the LGBTQ+ citizens of our state.

Dear Chair Weisz and members of the House Human Services Committee,

My testimony is in opposition to House Bill 1332. I ask that you give this bill a Do Not Pass.

I am a public school educator and a 29 year resident of North Dakota. HB 1332 actively harms the students I serve and the people I love – family, friends, and community members.

All individuals deserve health care that at its core abides by a principle of “do no harm.” Explicitly in the text LGBTQ individuals are stated as those in need of “repair” by discredited pseudo-psychology. Ostracization and isolation does not create a healthy community. Conversion therapy has wrought enormous harm and should be left to the dustbins of history.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Christopher Brown

Dear Chair Weisz and Members of the House Human Services Committee,

My testimony is in opposition to House Bill 1332. I urge you to give this bill a Do Not Pass.

I am a North Dakota business owner of a mental health practice and a member of the LGBTQ+ community. It has been my honor to serve citizens of this state for nearly two decades. This bill is especially concerning as we know that conversation therapy leads to increased suicidal ideation and can cause long lasting trauma for members of the LGBTQ+ community. Conversion therapy is seen by most professional organizations as harmful and unethical. There is no empirical evidence to demonstrate conversion therapy as effective or safe. It should be noted that many professional organizations oppose the practice of conversion therapy including:

The American Academy of Pediatrics

The American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy

American College of Physicians

American Counseling Association

American Medical Association

American Psychiatric Association

American Psychoanalytic Association

American Psychological Association

American School Counselor Association

American School Health Association

National Association of Social Workers

Just the Facts Coalition

World Psychiatric Association

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

Please prioritize the life, health, and safety of your constituents, as well as professional ethics of licensed providers across our state, and give this bill a Do Not Pass.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and service to the state of North Dakota.

Best regards,

Winnie Austin, LMFT

Affinity Counseling & Education Center, Owner

Fargo, ND

January 23rd, 2023

Regarding House Bill 1332

Dear ND House Human Services Committee,

My testimony is in opposition to House Bill 1332. I ask that you give this bill a **DO NOT PASS**.

This legislation along with others like it are billed as protecting children when in fact, they will do the opposite. Conversion therapy is a well documented as a harmful practice; children that have gone through the process are almost twice as likely to commit suicide than those that have not. Please listen to the expert testimony of medical practitioners and oppose this harmful bill. Conversion therapy has been thoroughly discredited.

To continue pushing this kind of legislation allows these harmful practices to continue. It will increase stress and lead to increased cases of harm and even death.

Please search your hearts and minds, and make the compassionate, rational decision.

Respectfully,

Will Lovelace
ND District 18 Resident

Dear Chair Weisz and members of the House Human Services Committee,

My testimony is in opposition to House Bill 1332. I ask that you give this bill a Do Not Pass.

The reason for this is that it is generally harmful and ineffective. As a Campus Minister, I can attest that I've heard firsthand how conversion attempts increase suicidality.

Recognizing that I am one person (and one who recognizes, respects, includes and supports LGBTQ+ people), I would like to draw your attention to the following evidence-based resources:

- Here is [a link](#) to a related study put out by the Minnesota Department of Health. While members of the ND Legislature may argue that the social and political perspectives and cultures of the two states vary, this is a scientific review based on research.
- While [this overview](#) was undertaken in the UK, it included a wide range of published findings of conversion therapies (many from North America), all published in English. I ask that you consider part 6.1 of the document, which clearly states that the significant evidence gathered by this review clearly and scientifically demonstrates, "The balance of evidence suggests that conversion therapy is unlikely to be effective and is associated with negative health outcomes."
- The American Psychiatric Association's [position statement](#) on conversion therapy of LGBTQ people is brief, but includes a deep and convincing review of studies that support that association's stand *against* conversion therapy.

Best Regards,
Deacon Jon M. Leiseth
Concordia College
Moorhead, MN

Dear Chair Weisz and members of the House Human Services Committee,

My testimony is in opposition to House Bill 1332. I ask that you give this bill a Do Not Pass. I'm deeply concerned about this attempt through legislation to make ethical a practice rooted in specific religious belief, deemed unethical by the medical community, and widely recognized for the cruelty and harm it poses only to LGBTQ+ American citizens, most of whom are minors and unable to protect themselves from religious ideologies disguised as credible therapy. Conversion therapy is based on the idea that anyone outside of heteronormative society needs to be fixed. What really needs to be fixed is this idea that American citizens should have laws based on a specific religious belief imposed upon them, regardless of their theistic or non-theistic belief system. Freedom from state sponsored religious persecution via state law is something all citizens of this country are entitled to. And, in truth, if we're not protecting the right to not be religious, freedom of religion is just a catch phrase for propaganda and not an actual thing all American citizens enjoy. With conversion therapy on the table and the actual possibility that our state will endorse it, it's hard to believe that North Dakota legislators respect our constitutional rights and are truly interested in the well being of all North Dakotans. I do hope that I am wrong. This bill does not serve our state and the only outcome of its passage will be more harm to an already suffering population.

Thank you for your time and consideration,
Christina Feldmann

I would like to recommend that you please vote do d not pass on bill 1332.

This bill has so many consequences for North Dakota children who don't have a voice to advocate for themselves. That is who this bill will affect most these children will be subjected to torture, cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. Conversation therapy has a long history of being ineffective and psychologically damaging to those who have been subjected to it. There is no reason that this practice should ever be allowed to be performed on any human. If we really want to "protect North Dakota kids" then do not pass bill 1332 .

Thank you for your time Jennifer white

Dear Chair Weisz and members of the House Human Services Committee,

My testimony is in opposition to House Bill 1332. I ask that you give this bill a Do Not Pass. The reason for this is that it conflicts with best practices.

This bill goes against everything social works stand for by allowing for known harmful practices to be considered ethical. It is well-documented that conversion therapy is incredibly harmful, especially in regards to the betrayal of trust when a minor is enrolled. These forms of “therapy” include verbal, mental, and physical abuse with the goal of forcing the person to repress certain aspects of themselves that naturally occur.

Guardians who enroll a minor in these sorts of practices should be reported to Child Protective Services, not encouraged by being told they are acting in an ethical manner. This bill is not acceptable and needs to be struck down immediately.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and service to our state

Best regards,
-Jamie Teeples

100 4th St S, Ste 608
Fargo, ND, 58103
701-264-5200 (p)
701-999-2779 (f)
info@canopymedicalclinic.com



Dear House Members,

I am the Medical Director at Canopy Medical Clinic, located in Fargo. Our clinic specializes in the medical care of LGBTQ+ individuals. I am writing in opposition to HB 1332, and I ask that you give this bill a **Do Not Pass** recommendation. HB 1332 seems to target one of our most vulnerable populations, which are our neighbors and community members who identify as LGBTQ+.

Research for decades has shown us that conversion therapy is basically equivalent to mental torture, causing irreversible trauma and PTSD for individuals who have gone through it. This is why many states consider it unethical or have even criminalized this type of therapy. Medical associations and organizations from around the world agree that conversion therapy is not helpful in any meaningful sense, but causes harm. In fact, any mental health therapist or provider who provides conversion therapy should have their license reviewed and revoked for providing care that causes harm, shame, fear, guilt and trauma to their clients.

I can not think of any medical procedure/intervention that is known to be extremely harmful, increasing rates of depression, anxiety and suicide, that is allowed to be normalized in State laws.

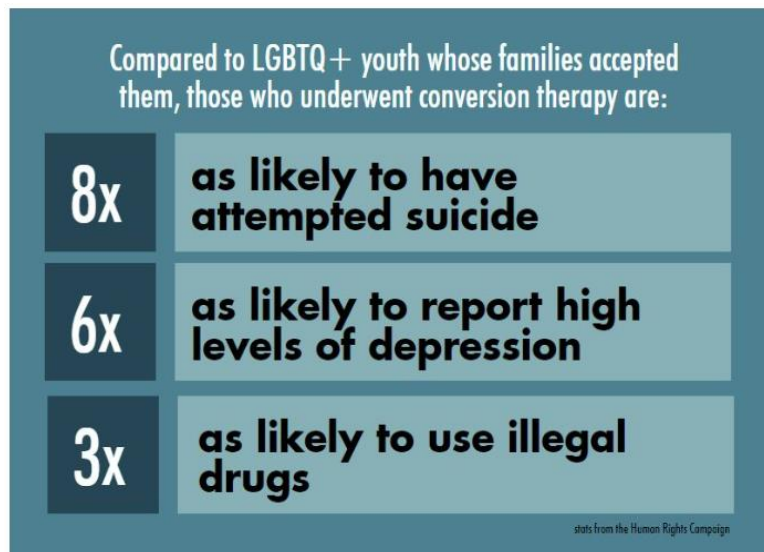
For the reasons listed above, I again urge a **Do No Pass** recommendation for this bill.

Heidi Selzler-Echola, MSN, APRN, WHNP-BC
Medical Director
Canopy Medical Clinic
hechola@canopymedicalclinic.com
701-264-5200

Chairman Weisz and members of the Human Services Committee,

My name is Laura Frisch, and I have been a licensed, practicing social worker in the state of North Dakota for 26 years. I hold both a bachelor's degree and a master's degree in social work, and today I am testifying in opposition to House Bill 1332. Our profession as social workers is part of the social sciences, meaning we look to validated studies to make decisions about the interventions we use and to guide us in our work.

Over 20 years ago, the National Association of Social Workers declared that conversion therapy is not effective, and in fact, can cause tremendous harm, especially to individuals under 18. We're in good company. In fact, the *American Academy of Pediatrics*, *American Counseling Association*, *American Federation of Teachers*, *American Psychological Association*, *American School Counselor Association*, *American School Health Association*, *Interfaith Alliance Foundation*, *National Association of School Psychologists*, and many, many more recognize that conversion therapy is not an acceptable intervention for individuals who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or questioning (LGBTQ+). That is because they have all declared that homosexuality is not a mental disorder and therefore there is no need for a "cure." When the North Dakota Board of Social Work Examiners adopted changes in June 2021 to the administrative code governing social workers, they were simply following suit with nearly every other major health and mental health organization in the United States.



I am gravely concerned that passing HB1332 sends the message to parents and others who have not researched conversion therapy, its efficacy and its harmful impact that this is an appropriate intervention. Depression, anxiety, alcoholism, suicide, drug use and low self-esteem are just a few of the potential effects of conversion therapy.

That is not to imply that therapy or counseling programs have no role to play with individuals who are LGBTQ+, or those who feel confused or are questioning their sexual identity. The role, however, is a neutral one, not invested in a particular outcome for the client. In contrast, conversion therapy takes a one-sided stance, that homosexuality in any form is wrong, and that only heterosexuality is right.

I urge members of the committee to leave decisions about the ethical behavior of social workers in the hands of the profession, and to vote do not pass on HB1332. Thank you and I would welcome any questions.

01/23/2023

HB 1332

Testimony in Opposition

Chairperson and Members of the Committee:

I urge you to vote DO NOT PASS on HB 1332.

It is not the place of the state legislators to determine what is ethical or unethical within a professional community regulated by its own licensing board. Passing this bill would undermine the purpose of a state licensing board whose duty is to oversee such matters of ethical or unethical practices within its scope. The mental health and medical communities in the country and around the world have overwhelmingly and consistently deemed conversion therapy and related treatments, which are to reverse, deter, or discourage clients/patients from engaging in their natural preferences, needs, and identifies within the LGBTQ+ community, as unethical and damaging. No licensed provider who serves the LGBTQ+ community would intentionally do harm to their clients/patients by engaging in conversion therapy.

This bill is a disgrace to the great state of North Dakota. I urge you to support the medical and mental health communities to continue doing their jobs by serving the people in this state with informed, evidence-based, and effective care. I ask you to vote DO NOT PASS on HB 1332.

Thank you for your time and service to the state,

Naomi Tabassum, LPCC

Owner/President/Clinician

New Story Counseling Services PLLC

Fargo, ND

Chairman Weisz and members of the House Human Services Committee,

My name is Maura Ferguson and I am writing this testimony as a resident of ND and independently from my employer. My views do not represent my employer. I write to you today as a licensed social worker, community organizer, a mother, and as someone who cares very much about the LGBTQIA+ community.

I strongly oppose HB 1332 and urge you to do the same. This bill is completely antithetical to the National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics, to which all North Dakota licensed social workers are legally bound. NASW released a position statement on conversion therapy in 2015 which expressly states that conversion therapy “violates the very tenets of the social work profession as outlined in the NASW Code of Ethics. The NASW Code of Ethics (1998) enunciates principles that address ethical decision making in social work practice with lesbians, gay men, bisexual, and transgender people; for example: 1) social workers’ commitment to clients’ self-determination and competence, and to achieving cultural competence and understanding social diversity, 2) social workers’ ethical responsibilities to colleagues, their commitment to interdisciplinary collaboration, and their responsibility to report unethical conduct of colleagues, 3) social workers’ ethical responsibilities as professionals—maintaining competence, fighting discrimination, and avoiding misrepresentation, and 4) social workers’ ethical responsibilities to the social work profession, to evaluation, and to research. The National Committee on LGBT Issues asserts that conversion therapy or SOCE are an infringement of the guiding principles inherent to social worker ethics and values; a position affirmed by the NASW policy statement on “Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Issues” (NASW 2014).” The entire position statement can be found at this link: <https://www.socialworkers.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=yH3UsGQQmYI%3D>

Moreover, conversion therapy has been disavowed by many expert, respected, ethical organizations, including the American Medical Association, the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy, the American College of Physicians, the American Counseling Association, the American Psychiatric Association, the American Psychological Association, the American School Counselor Association, and the Pan American Health Organization. This list is by no means exhaustive, but it is lengthy. This goes to show how harmful the practice of conversion therapy is. It has no place in our state.

I urge you to listen to the experts, allow ND social workers to stay within the bounds of our Code of Ethics, and vote Do Not Pass on HB 1332.

Maura Ferguson, LMSW

Grand Forks

Dear Chair Weisz and members of the House Human Services Committee, My testimony is in opposition to House Bill 1332. I ask that you give this bill a Do Not Pass. The reason for this is that it is harmful to our children and you are attacking the constituents that you are relying on to keep you in office. You are wasting the tax payers money attacking them and their children. a. Personal Impact: This bill impacts the people I care about, because I have children who are non-conforming and they have friends who are non-conforming. b. Unintended Consequence: This bill creates inconsistency with interstate competition and could invite lawsuits, other consequences may include children harming themselves or even attempting suicide. Both things I will not hesitate to make known the role you played in causing this. Thank you for your time, consideration, and service to our state.

Best regards,

Rody Hoover Schultz

January 23, 2023

Chairperson Lee and Committee Members,

I strongly urge a Do NOT Pass on HB 1332. As a local church pastor, I have served individuals who have undergone “conversion therapy.” The practice of conversion therapy is mentally and spiritually damaging upon an individual. Most often this unethical and abusive practice is performed on minors, which results in long-term mental and spiritual damage, increased self-harm and suicide rates, and decreased self-esteem.

The latest edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) is clear that different expressions of sexual orientation and gender identity are not disorders. Homosexuality and bisexuality are not mental illnesses. Gender nonconformity is not a mental disorder. These medical statements are backed by extensive research and are reviewed by ethics panels.

Furthermore, this bill states that the damaging practice of “conversion therapy” only requires the authorization of an individual’s parents or guardian and does not require the authorization of the individual being “treated.” Individuals of all ages deserve a voice in their wellbeing.

Do NOT Pass on HB 1332. This is an incredibly dangerous bill which puts already vulnerable individuals at high risk for increased harm.

Sincerely,

Rev. Gretchen Deeg
Local Church Pastor
Bismarck, ND

Dear Chair Weisz and members of the House Human Services Committee,

My testimony is in opposition to House Bill 1332. I ask that you give this bill a Do Not Pass. The fact that we have a bill going through the North Dakota legislation that says "1. It is not an ethical violation for a licensee to engage in practices or treatments that attempt to change or repair the sexual orientation or gender identity of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer individuals." Goes against every scientific study and scientific fact that is common knowledge to those that actually do real research. You can't change DNA. To be LGBTQIA2S+ cannot be groomed or changed by anyone. The science has already proven it. Youth is constantly told by the state of ND that they are less than. We have some high suicide rates among our LGBTQIA2S+ youth because of these very actions of our state.

You can't say that you want to protect the children of North Dakota and then pick and choose. Truly it is that simple.

It is for these reasons that I ask you to vote Do Not Pass. Thank you for your time, consideration, and service to our state.

Best regards,

Sarah Galbraith

Dear Members of the House Human Services Committee,

I am writing today in opposition to HB 1332 that regulates social workers and and allows conversion therapy.

Everyone who seeks mental health help needs someone to listen to them and take their concerns seriously. If social workers use their position of power to convince their clients that they should not identify as who they are, they are violating the social work code of ethics. This leads to more mental health crises and more young people abandoning the state just to stay safe. Please help keep our LGBTQ youth safe and able to enjoy the benefits of the state of North Dakota.

I urge you to give this bill a Do Not Pass vote.

Sincerely,

Kathy Hintz
Minot, ND

January 23, 2023

Opposition to House Bill 1332

Dear House Members,

My testimony is in opposition to HB 1332. I urge you to give this bill a **DO NOT PASS**.

Conversion therapy is dangerous, pseudoscientific nonsense. It does not work, it has not ever worked, and, why would anyone want it to work? It is backed by absolutely no credible scientific evidence whatsoever. The only data surrounding conversion therapy that you need to know about is that in 2019 The Trevor Project found that 42 percent of young people who underwent conversion therapy later attempted suicide.

An individual's sexual orientation is a static, deeply personal and private matter. People in this state who still believe that someone's sexual orientation can be changed need to consult credible medical professionals. The fact that so many people refuse to understand this basic issue is deeply disturbing and rooted in ignorance and, often, bigotry towards the LBGT community. Something I hear often by people who have hatred towards, or ignorance surrounding, LGBT people (in particular transgender people) is "it's basic biology". I have found that people who utter that phrase have demonstrated that they themselves clearly do not understand basic biology.

In addition, the fact that this bill uses language like "...change or **repair** the sexual orientation..." is deeply troubling. Using the word repair implies that there is something wrong with any sexual orientation other than heterosexuality (straight). LGBT people are human beings and are deserving of respect. Sadly, in 2023, they still are not being treated like normal people.

HB 1332 is an embarrassment to North Dakota and the people who live here.

We don't need this bill. We need the opposite of this bill. We need a bill banning conversion therapy.

Attached is a list of some of the organizations that have publicly denounced conversion therapy **for the literal torture that it is.**

I strongly urge you to oppose HB 1332

Shawn Nixon

List of organizations that have publicly condemned conversation therapy.

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry

American Academy of Pediatrics

American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy

American College of Physicians

American Counseling Association

American Medical Association

American Psychiatric Association

American Psychoanalytic Association

American Psychological Association

American School Counselor Association

American Association of School Administrators

National Association of Secondary School Principals

American Federation of Teachers

American School Health Association

National Education Association

National Association of Social Workers

National Association of School Psychologists

School Social Work Association of America

Interfaith Alliance Foundation

Pan American Health Organization

To The Legislators of North Dakota,

This letter encompasses the historic number of LGBTQ+ bills and measures being brought among the committee. As a member of the community, I have seen firsthand the hatred and bigotry that misguided policies like these can not only permit, but encourage.

To have so much legislature brought forward under the guise of religion in a nation that was founded on the basis of separation of church and state appalls me. I will let the medical and psychological experts speak out instead of me on the misguided pseudoscience quoted in the legislature. However, as someone that was born into the Catholic church, baptized into the church, and gone through the sacraments of First Communion and Confirmation, the primary tenet of the church should be love.

Love thy neighbor: Your gay neighbor, your trans neighbor, whoever your neighbor may be.

Please, choose love; do not pass these bills rooted in fear and hatred.

Brian Murphy
Grand Forks

January 23, 2023

Re: HB 1332

Dear Chair Weisz and members of the Human Services committee,

My name is Kara Gloe. I am a mental health therapist – specifically a Master Social Worker, licensed in both North Dakota and Minnesota. I work at Canopy Medical Clinic in Fargo, ND. Among the primary populations of people I serve are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, aromantic, and Two Spirit (LGBTQIA2S+) folks in North Dakota – including students in North Dakota’s public schools. I urge you to vote **Do Not Pass on HB 1332**. If passed, this bill would do irreparable harm to our LGBTQIA2S+ friends, family, and neighbors and sully the reputation of social workers throughout the state.

There is no clinical basis for the idea that there is any need to change or repair the sexual orientation or gender identity of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer individuals. As there is nothing wrong with being lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and/or queer, it would, in fact, be highly unethical to provide any type of clinical treatment.

Further, conversion therapy violates several of the National Social Work Association’s Code of Ethics, meaning any social worker who engaged in such a practice would be in violation of their professional licensing board. Conversion therapy does not respect the dignity and worth of the client. As it is not evidenced-based, so a social worker could not be practicing with integrity or competency.

Lastly, there is more than enough evidence to prove that conversion therapy is not only ineffective, it is truly harmful. I have heard several trans folks describe their experience with conversion therapy as traumatic, and this is borne out in the research.

Saying something is ethical does not make it so, and passing laws that give a free pass to mistreat people in the interest of fixing a problem that does not exist is far from ethical. Please do the right thing and vote **Do Not Pass** on HB 1332.

Sincerely,
Kara Gloe, LMSW
Canopy Medical Clinic

Dear Chair Weisz and members of the House Human Services Committee,

My testimony is in opposition to House Bill 1332. I ask that you give this bill a Do Not Pass.

I think that it is very alarming that we are seeing legislation designed to overturn an administrative rule that the North Dakota Board of Social Work Examiners approved. Social work is something you go to college for years to get a degree. It is something that requires continuing education over your career to maintain your license.

The field of social work is well regulated under its own ethics to determine best practices and do no harm to those it serves. These practices are defined and determined by individuals with decades of experiences, research, and often deliberated across multiple meetings, discussions, and months prior to changing or approving policy. Something that requires time, wisdom, and cool heads. Further the policies they create are subject to and need to change with new information and better research.

I cannot represent them better than they can represent themselves and they will represent themselves within testimony and to the committee that hears this legislation. What I will say is that if we pass this legislation, what is the point of our North Dakota Board of Social Work Examiners? What is the point of their process? Why even have a board? Why have a license requirement? Is this our answer to the social work shortage in our state? When the session is over can our legislators start taking clients and managing cases?

Perhaps I misunderstand the function and purpose of our legislative session, as I feel it is the legislative body that should listen to the needs of social workers when determining institutional policy or needed bills and not their responsibility to tell social workers what their code of ethics should be.

Regardless, I find it hard to believe a social worker would willingly practice conversion therapy. The majority of social workers I've encountered are incredible people. They care deeply, work difficult jobs, and cry with the clients they try to help. They encounter every kind of person, going through every kind of struggle. They sometimes see people at their worst. And they help them to find their best. In a very real way they keep the lights on in our state. (That's a metaphor, no shade to power companies, stay bright!).

I believe that realistically this bill serves to normalize conversion therapy as an option for parents who have transgender or gay youth and don't want to. And if they go through with this, they'll hardly have to worry about having a trans or gay kid anymore. I can't express how tragic it is that we've come here. That we've come back to this notion of praying the gay away. That we're trying to legislate normalization of a practice that has tremendous research showing the harm. There really isn't a debate between reasonable people on this.

When I first saw this bill, I was completely aghast. It would be like seeing a racial segregation bill being proposed again. I really had suspected we moved on from certain things and understood

the harm they had on individuals and communities. And I really don't understand how someone gets into the space where they've convinced themselves conversion therapy works, is good, or is effective.

I understand we have a lot of growing to do as a culture to really understand and become comfortable with transgender and non-binary population. I understand compromises that need to be made as we get there. This bill isn't that.

It is for all of these reasons that I recommend voting Do Not Pass.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and service to our state

Best regards,
Faye Seidler

Dear Chair Weisz and members of the House Human Services Committee,

My testimony is in strict opposition to House Bill 1332. I beg you give this bill a Do Not Pass. This bill wants to establish practice of a harmful and completely horrific 'therapy' that is akin to torture. Conversion therapy has been discredited by basically every major credible mental health organization. It is blatant child abuse and comes from a harmful place of thinking that trans/sexuality is a disease or mental defect that can be fixed. I hear the word 'grooming' thrown around whenever extreme-conservatives speak about LGBTQ (because they see it as an easy way to villainize the community and make their self imposed crusade sound less like oppression and more about a noble cause) But conversion therapy, THAT is grooming. And it doesn't work, It convinces the individual they are broken and unfixable and increases suicide depression and self harm in those forced to endure it. It is Pseudoscience and a falsehood born from the idea that homosexuality and anything akin to it is an issue in need of solving. You absolutely must do everything to ensure this and all its other hate/fear mongering bills never reach our constitutions or laws, vote against it. 1 discrimination bill is a problem, 2 is a dangerous trend, 10 is a cancerous growth, and how many they are trying to pass... is nightmarish beyond words. Surely you can see it too.

-Nate Brown

Testimony in Support of HB 1332

Dr. Daniel Scrimshaw, DO, Emergency Medicine Physician
Dr. Lovita Scrimshaw, DO, Emergency Medicine Physicians
American Academy of Medical Ethics, North Dakota State Directors
January 23, 2023

Good morning Chairman Weisz and honorable members of the House Human Services Committee. We are physicians in Minot, ND and also serve as the North Dakota State Directors of the American Academy of Medical Ethics. We are testifying in regard to House Bill 1332 and respectfully request that you render a "DO PASS" on this bill.

We would like to quote from the Christian Medical and Dental Associations Ethics Statements related to the medical impact of counseling which will explain in detail medical reasons for our support of this bill.

"Healthcare professionals must not be prevented from providing counseling and support to patients with gender dysphoria and who request assistance with accepting and maintaining their biologic sex and gender identity."¹

"Healthcare professionals should not be prevented from providing support and counseling to patients or to parents of children who request assistance with abstaining from homosexual behavior (change-allowing therapy)."²

"Transient gender questioning can occur during childhood. Most children and adolescents who express transgender tendencies eventually come to identify with their biological sex during adolescence or early childhood.^{48,49,50,51,52,53} There is evidence that gender dysphoria is influenced by psychosocial experiences and can be exacerbated by promoters of transgender ideology.^{27,33} Early counseling for children expressing gender dysphoria is critical to treat any underlying psychological disorders, including depression, anxiety, or suicidal tendencies, and should be done without promoting attempts for gender transitioning."¹

We support this bill, because patients deserve the option of respectful counseling in regard to this matter. Some patients may request this therapy and this should be an allowable option for the patient. We have cared for many patients who have varying gender identities and who are experiencing severe depression and suicidal ideation. Often these patients must be admitted emergently to inpatient psychiatric care to help prevent loss of life by suicide. These patients deserve the option to receive this type of counseling if they so wish.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 1332 and again recommend a "Do Pass."

References:

1 CMDA Ethics Statement: Transgender Identification. Christian Medical & Dental Associations. 2021; pp. 5-8.

2 CMDA Ethics Statement: Homosexuality. Christian Medical & Dental Associations, p. 5.

27. Zucker KJ, Lawrence AA, Kreukels BP. Gender Dysphoria in Adults. *Annu Rev Clin Psychol*. 2016;12:217-247. doi:10.1146/annurev-clinpsy-021815-093034

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48. 2013. *Diagnostic And Statistical Manual Of Mental Disorders*. Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Association, p.455.

49. Tolman, D., Diamond, L., Bauermeister, J., George, W., Pfaus, J. and Ward, L., 2014. *APA Handbook Of Sexuality And Psychology*. Washington D.C: American Psychological Association, p.774.

50. Cohen-Kettenis PT, Delemarre-van de Waal HA, Gooren LJ. The treatment of adolescent transsexuals: changing insights. *J Sex Med*. 2008;5(8):1892-1897. doi:10.1111/j.1743-6109.2008.00870.x

51. Ristori J, Steensma TD. Gender dysphoria in childhood. *Int Rev Psychiatry*. 2016;28(1):13-0. doi:10.3109/09540261.2015.1115754

52. Hembree WC, Cohen-Kettenis PT, Gooren L, et al. Endocrine Treatment of Gender-Dysphoric/Gender-Incongruent Persons: An Endocrine Society Clinical Practice Guideline [published correction appears in *J Clin Endocrinol Metab*. 2018 Feb 1;103(2):699] [published correction appears in *J Clin Endocrinol Metab*. 2018 Jul 1;103(7):2758-2759]. *J Clin Endocrinol Metab*. 2017;102(11):3869-3903. doi:10.1210/jc.2017-01658

53. Kenneth J. Zucker (2018) The myth of persistence: Response to “A critical commentary on follow-up studies and ‘desistance’ theories about transgender and gender non-conforming children” by Temple Newhook et al.(2018), *International Journal of Transgenderism*, 19:2, 231-245, DOI: 10.1080/15532739.2018.1468293

Testimony in Support of HB 1332

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References:

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33. Bradley SJ, Zucker KJ. Gender identity disorder and psychosexual problems in children and adolescents. *Can J Psychiatry*. 1990;35(6):477-486. doi:10.1177/070674379003500603

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January 24th, 2023

From: ND Psychiatric Society

Re: In Opposition to HB 1332

Esteemed Chairman Weisz and Committee Members,

My name is Gabriela Balf, I am a psychiatrist in Bismarck and a Clinical Associate Professor at UND, and I speak on my behalf.

I cannot abide by my professional association's code of ethics and work with a therapist who encourages conversion therapy. Conversion therapy assumes that gender incongruence is a mental disorder and it can be cured by its application. The 21st century science is clear, IT IS NOT. Conversion therapy was **declared unethical in 1998** by the American Psychiatric Association. Its reiteration in the [Position Statement of 2018](#) further depicts the catastrophic consequences that this therapy has had in increasing the rates of depression, anxiety, suicide, substance use.

Therefore: Why persist in increasing minority stress for a small number of our children? When we face so many urgent issues related to the mental health of children in our state, why don't we spend your valuable time thinking about productive ways to address those, instead of wasting your days of selfless volunteering on **bills that are proven to harm and/or kill some of our children**, bills that will stain your legacy?

I urge you to be thoughtful when you vote for all the transgender bills that are coming your way, and listen to science. 21st century science.



Gabriela Balf-Soran, MD, MPH

Assoc Clin Prof – UND School of Medicine – Behavioral Sciences and Psychiatry Dept

ND Psychiatric Society Past-President

World Professional Association Transgender Health member

Testimony of Mia Halvorson

In Opposition of HB 1332: "Relating to the regulation of social workers."

January 24th, 2023

Dear Committee Members,

My name is Mia Halvorson, and I am currently a North Dakota resident and undergraduate student taking classes at both North Dakota State University and Minot State University. I am double majoring in Human Development Family Science and Social Work.

I find it horrendous that this bill is even up for consideration. As a future social worker, considering conversion therapy for our clients is blatantly unethical, regardless of this bill. We follow the six NASW Code of Ethics, which are: service, social justice, dignity and worth of the person, importance of human relationships, integrity, and competence.

HB 1332 directly and negatively impacts all of the NASW Code of Ethics listed above.

I ask that you vote NO on HB 1332 for the reasons listed above, the reasons other individuals testifying provide, and the hundreds of additional reasons I could provide.

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to share this testimony.

-Mia Halvorson

TESTIMONY on HB 1332
from the
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS—NORTH DAKOTA CHAPTER
to the
ND House Human Services Committee
January 24, 2023

The NASW-ND submits this testimony in opposition to House Bill 1332. We appreciate the opportunity to share our perspective.

The North Dakota Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW-ND) is a membership association representing social workers in the state of North Dakota. The mission of NASW-ND is to strengthen and protect the practice of social work in North Dakota and to advance sound and equitable social policy. Our opposition to HB 1332 is solidly grounded in our organization’s mission.

NASW-ND strongly opposes HB 1332 for the following reasons:

1. In 2021, the ND Board of Social Work Examiners added the following language to Administrative Code 75.5-02-06.1-01: “... *it is a violation of the code of ethics for a social worker licensed by the board to engage in any practices or treatments that attempt to change or repair...sexual orientation or gender identity...*”¹ [i.e., “conversion or reparative therapies”].

HB 1332 asserts that it is ***not*** an ethical violation for social workers to engage in the pseudotherapy commonly called “conversion therapy” or “reparative therapy.” Since none of the sponsors of the bill are social workers (according to their legislative biographies), they are presuming to know and understand the nature and standards of ethical social work practice. They are wrong in their presumption. **It *is* an ethical violation for licensed social workers to engage in “conversion or reparative therapies” for the following reasons:**

- a. **“*Conversion or reparative therapy*” is an *ineffective pseudotherapy*.** Peer reviewed studies indicate that there is no credible evidence that “conversion therapies” are effective in changing sexual orientation.² Given the

- preponderance of evidence against the efficacy of “conversion therapies,” if licensed social workers practice “conversion therapies,” they may be held legally liable for its ineffectiveness given that “conversion therapies” violate the social work profession’s code of ethics and standard of care (because these “therapies” are ineffective and harmful). HB 1332 essentially asks social workers to ignore their profession’s ethical standards of practice.
- b. ***“Conversion or reparative therapy” is a dangerous pseudotherapy.*** Valid and reliable studies show that “conversion therapies” are actually harmful, demonstrating an association between the experience of “conversion therapy” and adverse health effects such as anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation, and suicide attempts.^{3, 4}
 - c. ***“Conversion or reparative therapy” is a discredited pseudotherapy.*** The National Association of Social Workers was one of the first mental health associations to condemn this discredited activity. All major U.S. mental health and medical associations including, but not limited to, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Medical Association, the American Psychiatric Association, and the American Psychological Association publicly express the dangers of sexual orientation and gender identity change efforts.^{5, 6}

2. **The bill is an attack on the education, judgment, and practice of licensed professional social workers in North Dakota.** The North Dakota Board of Social Work Examiners and the North Dakota Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers both acknowledge the dangerous and unethical nature of “conversion or reparative therapies” and both consider it an unethical social work practice. Trained, licensed, and experienced social workers, not legislators, are best able to determine the nature of effective and ethical social work practice.
3. **The bill countermands the legislative rulemaking process.** The bill will overturn a portion of North Dakota [Administrative Code 75.5-02-06.1-01](#). On June 8, 2021, testimony was given by the ND Board of Social Work Examiners to the ND Legislative Rules Committee in support of this section of the Administrative Code. On that day, a majority of the Administrative Rules Committee voted in favor of this Administrative Code section. Rules relating to the practice of human service professionals that are presented and supported by those professionals and passed by the ND Administrative Rules Committee should be respected, and human

service professionals should be able to rely on legislators to trust the judgment of North Dakota human service professionals.

The NASW-ND respectfully requests that the House Human Services Committee votes Do Not Pass on this bill.

Testimony submitted by Kristin Rubbelke, Executive Director, NASW-ND,
krubbelke.naswnd@socialworkers.org

Footnotes:

¹ [Code of Ethics](#)

² [Research on "conversion therapies"](#)

³ [Summary of findings on "conversion therapy"](#)

⁴ [Ending "Conversion Therapy"](#)

⁵ [Lies and Dangers of "Reparative Therapy"](#)

⁶ [American Psychological Association; American Psychiatric Association](#)



January 24, 2023

To the Members of the North Dakota House Human Services Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to express our opposition to House Bill 1332, which would exempt state-licensed mental health providers from responsible regulation of professional ethics in regard to so-called “conversion therapy.”

I am the co-founder of Born Perfect, a survivor-led movement of survivors and legal experts working to end conversion therapy. In the past eight years, Born Perfect has helped to pass laws protecting minors from conversion therapy in 20 states, the District of Columbia, and more than 80 localities. We have also consulted with several legislative bodies and public officials considering similar legislation in other countries.

As a survivor of conversion therapy, I know first-hand that attempts by a therapist to change a person’s sexual orientation or gender identity result in serious, lasting harms. Like many other young people, I believed the professional therapists who told me I could change my sexual orientation and become straight. But after five years of doing everything that I could to change, I was plunged into depression and despair upon realizing that these “therapies” were bogus and that I could not change.

Like other survivors, it has taken me years to recover from the damage this experience caused. I will never be able to recover the time that I spent in this harmful and discredited treatment, which prevented me for years from living as my true self and robbed me of years that I will never regain. Conversion therapy also nearly destroyed my family, driving a wedge between me and my parents and siblings, based on my therapists’ false assertion that being gay is caused by problems or deficiencies in parenting.

There is absolutely no scientific basis for that assertion, which underlies almost all conversion therapy.



By blaming parents, conversion therapists drive a wedge between LGBTQ youth and their families at the very time when young people most need parental love and support. No matter what a person's religious or moral beliefs, people from across the political and religious spectrum have recognized that subjecting a young person to conversion therapy is destructive and harmful.

As my experience and that of other survivors shows, conversion therapy is an insidious practice that has no place in the practice of modern mental health care.

Since California passed the first law protecting minors from conversion therapy in 2012, many more states and localities in the United States, and a growing number of countries across the globe, have taken action to address this public health crisis.

These laws have been supported by elected officials from across the political spectrum, in recognition that this is truly an issue of public health, not politics, and that all responsible public officials have a responsibility to protect young people from a practice that is universally condemned as ineffective and unsafe by the international medical community.

For these reasons, we strongly support regulation protecting minors from conversion therapy, and we urge you to vote against this bill.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping, fluid strokes that form a stylized, abstract shape.

Mathew Shurka
Co-Founder, Born Perfect



NATIONAL CENTER FOR LESBIAN RIGHTS

January 24, 2023

To the Members of the North Dakota House Human Services Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this letter in opposition to House Bill 1332, which would interfere with enforcement of professional ethics standards for licensed social workers and protect the discredited, unethical, and harmful practice of conversion therapy.

The National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR) is a national nonprofit legal organization in the United States dedicated to protecting and advancing the civil rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people and their families. NCLR's youth project was founded in 1993 specifically to address the mistreatment of LGBT youth in the mental health system. As part of our Born Perfect campaign to end conversion therapy, we have seen firsthand the devastating impact on parents and families when they are misled by licensed professionals who give them false information that therapy can change a child's sexual orientation or gender identity. Tragically, the harms caused by these practices include a significantly heightened risk of suicide, depression, and other serious physical and emotional harms.

Modern science recognizes that being LGBT is not a disorder. In 2009, the American Psychological Association convened a task force to review all the scientific data on efforts to change a person's sexual orientation or gender expression. The task force concluded that there is no scientific evidence that such efforts are effective, and significant evidence that they are harmful—especially for children. In the years since the Task Force completed its review, studies conducted by Dr. Caitlin Ryan, Director of the Family Acceptance Project, have further documented the destructive impact on lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth when the adults in their lives engage in rejecting behaviors, including subjecting them to conversion therapy. The harms associated with this rejection are dramatic. Young adults who were subjected to these practices had dramatically increased rates of depression, illegal drug use, risky sexual behavior, and suicidal ideation and attempted suicide.

Because these practices have no scientific basis, provide no benefits, and carry such high risks, leading medical and mental health associations have issued policy statements strongly condemning conversion therapy and warning against its use on minors. The American Academy of Pediatrics has advised parents to “[a]void any treatments that claim to be able to change a person's sexual orientation, or treatment ideas that see homosexuality as a sickness.”



-2-

The American Psychological Association advises “parents, guardians, young people, and their families to avoid sexual orientation change efforts that portray homosexuality as a mental illness or developmental disorder.” In 2015, a New Jersey court concluded that “any expert opinion based on the initial premise that homosexuality is a mental disorder or abnormal is unreliable and ... barred” and went on to rule that professional claims that being LGBT is a curable mental disorder constitute consumer fraud. A California court issued a similar decision in 2018.

NCLR has helped pass laws protecting youth from conversion therapy in twenty states and the District of Columbia and has helped defend them before four circuit courts. We strongly believe that legislative action is needed to protect youth from these dangerous and discredited practices.

Working closely with survivors of these ineffective and harmful practices, we know all too well that taking action to end conversion therapy is truly a matter of life and death. We express our strong opposition to this harmful legislation which would undermine professional ethics in social work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Shannon Minter", written in a cursive style.

Shannon P. Minter
Legal Director
National Center for Lesbian Rights



January 24, 2023

To the Members of the North Dakota House Human Services Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to express our opposition to HB1332, which would override professional ethics standards for licensed social workers and protect the unethical practice of conversion therapy.

The following is a letter by the Former Ex-Gay Leaders Alliance, a group of 25 former providers of conversion therapy, expressing their strong opposition to this bill.

Conversion therapy, also known as “reparative therapy,” “ex-gay therapy” or “sexual orientation change efforts” (SOCE), professes to help lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people to change or overcome their sexual orientation or gender identity.

At one time, we were not only deeply involved in conversion “therapy” programs; we were the founders, the leaders, and the promoters.

Together, we represent more than half a century of experience, so few people are more knowledgeable about the ineffectiveness and harm of conversion therapy. We know firsthand the terrible emotional and spiritual damage it can cause, especially for LGBTQ youth.

We once believed that there was something morally wrong and psychologically “broken” about being LGBTQ. We know better now.

We once believed that sexual orientation or gender identity were somehow chosen or could be changed. We know better now.

We once thought it was impossible to embrace our sexual orientation or sexual identity as an intrinsic, healthy part of who we are and who we were created to be. We know better now.

Looking back, we were just believing (and sometimes teaching) what we had been taught — that our sexual orientation or gender identity needed mending. We grew up being told that being LGBTQ was disordered, sick, mentally ill, sinful and displeasing to God. We grew up being told that loving, same-sex relationships were shallow, lust-driven, deceived, disordered and impossible.

We grew up with the repetitive message that LGBTQ people were not enough — not straight enough, not Christian enough, not manly or womanly



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San Francisco, CA 94102



- 2 -

enough, not faithful enough, not praying enough. Never, ever enough.

“Toxic” probably sums it up best. That message is poison to the soul. Especially a child’s soul. It can take a lifetime to get rid of that old programming and replace it with healthy, non-toxic views of yourself.

Recovery from conversion therapy is difficult at best. Some remain forever scarred, emotionally and spiritually. Conversion therapy reinforces internalized homophobia, anxiety, guilt and depression. It leads to self-loathing and emotional and psychological harm when change doesn’t happen. Regrettably, too many will choose suicide as a result of their sense of failure.

In light of this, we now stand united in our conviction that conversion therapy is not “therapy” but is instead both ineffective and harmful. We align ourselves with every major mainstream professional medical and mental health organization in denouncing attempts to change sexual orientation or gender identity.

As former “ex-gay” leaders, having witnessed the incredible harm done to those who attempted to change their sexual orientation or gender identity, we join together in calling for Minnesota to ban conversion therapy – and to oppose any measure to protect conversion therapy. We can't take back the harm that we caused, but we want to prevent future damage.

Enacting HB1332 would protect the harmful conduct that we, as former conversion therapy advocates, have renounced.

This letter was authored by Michael Bussee, a co-founder of Exodus International, and signed by members of the Former Ex-Gay Leaders Alliance (FELA): Alan Manning Chambers; Anthony Bishop; Bill Prickett; Bradford Allen Reubendale; Cat Chapman; Darlene Bogle; David Foreman; David Matheson; Don Brown; Jeff Coe; Jeremy Marks; Jim Marjoram; John J. Smid; John Paulk; Kim Brett; McKrae Game; Paul Martin; Randy Thomas; Roy A. Blankenship; Tim Rymel; Wendy VanderWal Gritter; Wenn Lawson; and Yvette Cantu Schneider.

We join the Former Ex-Gay Leaders Alliance in strongly opposing HB1332, and we urge you to vote against this legislation.



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- 3 -

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping, fluid strokes that form a stylized, abstract shape.

Mathew Shurka
Co-Founder, Born Perfect
mathew@bornperfect.org



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San Francisco, CA 94102



**Kayla Schmidt – Interim Executive Director, North Dakota Women’s Network
Opposition – HB 1332
North Dakota House Human Services Committee**

January 24, 2023

Dear Chair Weisz and members of the House Human Services Committee,

My name is Kayla Schmidt and I am the Interim Executive Director of the North Dakota Women’s Network. I am providing testimony in opposition to House Bill 1332.

Our mission includes empowering individuals to take an informed role in their health care decisions. We rely on experts to guide us in making these personal choices. We trust that the care we receive is informed and will not do harm.

North Dakotans deserve healthcare that preserves their personal liberty, dignity, and privacy. House Bill 1332 endangers these ideals. Whereas we often hear about the need to invest in North Dakota’s economic growth, legislation like this is a deterrent for modern families and workers to want to live or work in our state.

Similar attempts to pass discriminatory legislation in North Dakota has strongly been opposed by community leaders, athletic organizations, medical experts, social workers, parents, educators, students, faith leaders, representatives of local Chambers of Commerce and tourism organizations, and the LGBTQ+ community.

The North Dakota Women’s Network stands with these groups and asks that HB 1332 receives a Do Not Pass Recommendation.

Thank you.

Kayla Schmidt
director@ndwomen.org

Chair Weisz and members of the House Human Services Committee,

My testimony is in opposition to House Bill 1332. I ask that you give this bill a DO NOT PASS.

The practice of conversion therapy in attempt to change a person's sexual identity and gender identity has long been debunked by numerous professional medical, psychiatric, counseling, and social work organizations. It is banned in 22 countries, 25 states, DC, Puerto Rico, and over 100 municipalities across the United States.

Conversion therapy is a dangerous and harmful practice. Being LGBTQ+ is not a mental illness and should not be treated as such. There are volumes of information available regarding the risks of conversion therapy and the ethics of practicing or endorsing such treatment. I find no basis for a bill of this nature to be brought into hearing; or moved forward out of committee.

It is well documented that the lack of acceptance for any individual by their family, friends, and the community one lives in results in increased risk of depression, self-harm, and alcohol or drug abuse. The impact of this legislation and other bills targeting LGBTQ+ people as "less than" or "broken" sends a message that we are something other than the kind of citizen that North Dakota want to call her own.

The state loses so very many talented people of all ages and professional qualifications because of efforts like these. It is not only LGBTQ+ individuals, but allies who leave the state because they feel unwelcome.

Thank you for your consideration and due diligence in researching the harm this will cause to North Dakotans and North Dakota as you work through this bill. Again, I ask that you return a DO NOT PASS on HB 1332.

Cindy Roholt
D45 – Fargo, ND

Dear Chair Weisz and members of the House Human Services Committee,
My name is Martin Avery. I live in Fargo, ND and am an ordained United Methodist Elder, currently serving a two charge Lutheran parish in Mayville, ND. My testimony is in opposition to House Bill 1332. I ask that you give this bill a Do Not Pass.

In my role as a pastor, I provide pastoral care for families within my churches and I cannot in good conscience support a bill that would allow for a therapy that has been shown to be harmful.

I have had a church member at a church I have previously served, tell me how they turned themselves inside out, trying not to be gay. They participated in conversion therapy and were severely traumatized by the experience. As a Methodist Elder, I'm to "Do no harm, do good, and stay in love with God." I must stand in opposition to this bill.

This bill will serve will give legitimacy to a practice that has been thoroughly debunked and cause serious mental harm to citizens of ND. Passage of the bill will increase the number of people making the decision to leave the state and for those who may have moved here, to reconsider.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and service to our state
Best regards,
Rev. Martin Avery

January 24, 2023

Dear Chair Weisz and Members of the House Human Services Committee:

My name is Rev. Karen Van Fossan. I am an ordained minister and licensed professional counselor, serving as a pastoral counselor in the state of North Dakota. **I ask that you give HB 1332 a Do Not Pass recommendation.**

This bill directly contradicts ethical conduct for counselors like myself. These ethical standards are set by qualified mental health professionals, based upon accumulated expertise, research, and practice. Conversion therapy does not become ethical simply by an act of legislation. In fact, according to a position statement by the American Counseling Association (ACA):

“Conversion or reparative therapy is the discredited practice of using ‘therapy’ to attempt to change someone's sexual orientation. The American Counseling Association opposes conversion therapy because it does not work, can cause harm, and violates our Code of Ethics. It is an attempt to treat something that is not a mental illness. Conversion therapy has been banned in California, Oregon, Illinois, Vermont, New Jersey, New Mexico, Connecticut, Nevada, Rhode Island, Washington, Maryland, New Hampshire, Hawaii, Delaware, New York, Massachusetts, Colorado, Maine, and Washington DC. ACA will continue to support state legislation that bans this discredited practice.”

In other words, **the expectations of this bill are in direct conflict with the expectations of my professional Code of Conduct.**

Indeed, **this bill would do unnecessary harm to the young LGBTQ+ people I serve.** The fundamental principle that I draw upon in my work is the assurance that we are all created in the image and likeness of God. This is no less true for LGBTQ+ children and young people than it is for anyone else.

Still, according to the 2019 Youth Risk Behavior Survey in North Dakota, lesbian, gay, and bisexual students are:

- Twice as likely as their heterosexual peers to be bullied, either electronically or on school property;
- More than three times as likely to feel sad or hopeless;
- More than twice as likely to attempt suicide.

As the American Counseling Association makes clear, conversion therapy doesn't address these disparities; it exacerbates them. It's hard enough being different in a culture that values uniformity. There's no reason to make life any harder for the wide, diverse rainbow of God's creation. LGBTQ+ youth, like any youth in counseling settings, need support from **qualified, ethical mental health practitioners who affirm their inherent goodness.**

I urge you to vote Do Not Pass on HB 1332. Thank you very much for your time and attention, and I would be glad to respond to any questions.

Sincerely,
Rev. Karen Van Fossan, M.Div., LPC

Testimony in Opposition to SB 1332:

Traditionally, there has been a lot of freedoms extended to mental health providers (social workers included) to practice in a way that is in line with their training, education, and experience. It is very rare for a particular type of therapy to be raised up as harmful. However, “treatments that attempt to change or repair the sexual orientation or gender identity of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer individuals” represents one of the rare interventions that has overwhelming research suggesting ineffectiveness and harm. The National Association of Social Workers [position statement](#) indicates “no data demonstrate that SOCE or reparative therapy or conversion therapy is effective, rather have succeeded only in short term reduction of same-sex sexual behavior and negatively impact the mental health and self-esteem of the individual.”

As a psychologist, my experience with this confirms the research. The best way to allow a person to explore their gender identity and sexual orientation is through Socratic questioning and a nonjudgmental stance. It is openness to explore that has allowed many people to come to a true understanding of themselves. I have had many people who have come to me with questions and confusion about their identity and sexual orientation that have finished treatment with a renewed understanding of themselves as a heterosexual and/or identity aligned with their biological sex. There is nothing unethical about assisting patients in exploring the effects of trauma and societal pressures on identity and sexual development. We understand that this exploration, without assuming one outcome over another, is what allows people to become their true selves. It is unethical to push change but completely permissible to explore change.

I am particularly concerned about how this bill will impact our youth. If parents bring their young people to a social worker who is biased towards a particular sexual orientation or gender outcome, it is likely to lead to harm. Increased levels of depression, relational issues, sexual problems, and, in some cases, increased risk for suicide can be the results.

In summary, this is an issue that is best left for our numerous oversight boards (including social work) to manage. If this bill was passed, it would not take away the reality that social workers would still be in ethical violation of their state and local boards for the practice of reparative therapy. We would be encouraging practitioners to consider providing a type of therapy that is dangerous to their clients. I strongly urge a DO NOT PASS VOTE on SB 1332.

To whom it may concern,

My testimony is in opposition to House Bill 1332. I ask that you give this bill a Do Not Pass.

The reason is this bill affects people I care about a lot, as well as people I don't know well enough yet. This bill pretty much states it is not an ethical violation for a licensee to engage in practices or treatments that attempt to change or repair the sexual orientation or gender identity of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer individuals. This proposal basically says it's okay to conduct conversion therapy, which is a therapy for changing a person's sexual orientation, on the idea that homosexuality is a mental condition that requires therapy (a position condemned by the American Psychiatric Association as unethical).

You might wonder who I am. I'm not only a transgender man who lives in North Dakota, but I am a student at the University of North Dakota who is studying social work for my major. I am just representing myself, not my school nor for any other organization. I felt this bill would affect my future on my practice in the future.

From what I can understand this bill, it is trying to restrict how I care for future patients who identify as part of the LGBTQAI2S+ community. I feel like that goes against the National Association of Social Work code of ethics. Especially against the core values of social work which are:

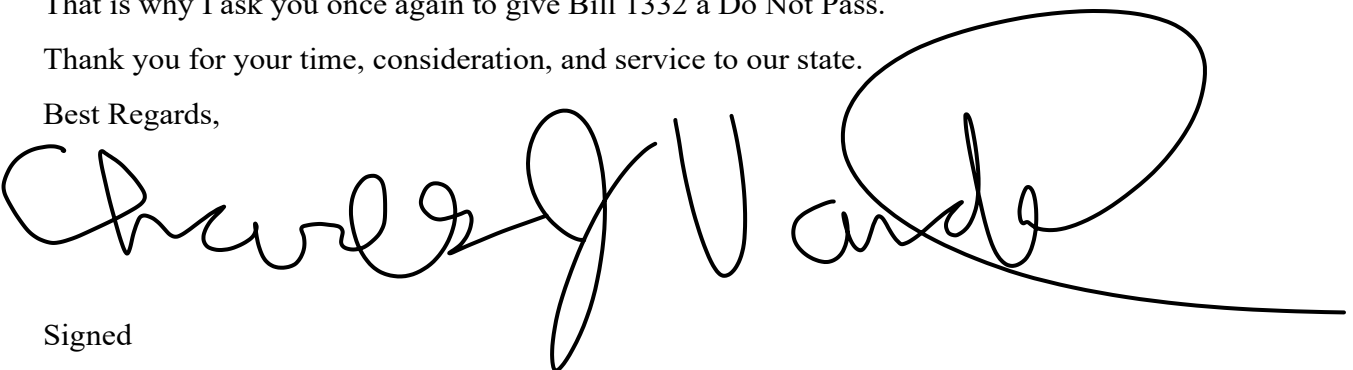
- service
- social justice
- dignity and worth of the person
- importance of human relationships
- integrity
- competence

With is bill, it affects the services social workers now and, in the future, can provide. It is telling LGBTQAI2S+ community that there is something wrong with them, and they need to fix which damages the dignity and worth of the person. I know some might argue that there are some who might want to change. Did you know that in a 2020 survey, 58% of LGBTQ youths reported that someone, typically parents, friends, relatives, or religious leaders, attempted to convince them to change their sexual orientation or gender identity. It is unknown how many adults are talked into changing their identity due to religion, family and many other types of beliefs. There are stats and data showing the damage conversion therapy has. By not passing this pill, you help lower the stats and data.

That is why I ask you once again to give Bill 1332 a Do Not Pass.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and service to our state.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Andrew V. Anderson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent loop at the end of the last name.

Signed

Charles J Vondal

Forsythe, A., Pick, C., Tremblay, G., Malaviya, S., Green, A., & Sandman, K. (2022). Humanistic and Economic Burden of Conversion Therapy Among LGBTQ Youths in the United States. *JAMA pediatrics*, *176*(5), 493–501. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamapediatrics.2022.0042>

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



North Dakota House of Representatives

STATE CAPITOL
600 EAST BOULEVARD
BISMARCK, ND 58505-0360



Representative Brandon Prichard

District 8
8600 Creekside Drive
Bismarck, ND 58504-3952

C: 701-220-0624

bprichard@ndlegis.gov

COMMITTEES:

Human Services
Agriculture

HB 1332

House Health and Human Services

Rep. Weisz, Chairman

January 24, 2023

Chairman Weisz and members of the House Health and Human Services Committee,

My name is Rep. Brandon Prichard and I represent District 8 which includes rural and suburban Burleigh County, the entire area of Emmons County, and Wilton which is in McLean County. I am here to testify in support of HB 1332 which would allow individuals who identify as or believe they are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer to receive healthcare that aligns with (1) their values, and (2) their request for care upon consent. This bill does not force conversation therapy upon non-consenting individuals. In fact, the term "conversion therapy" is not mentioned once in the bill. HB 1332 is only intended to expand counseling options for questioning individuals.

In June of 2021, the Administrative Rules Interim Committee amended administrative code to bar social workers from offering counseling services to people requesting care based upon their values if those values aligned with traditional marriage or biological fact. HB 1332 would reverse this rule by allowing for counseling services to be administered to patients based upon their traditional values. Why should counselors be required to only give care to affirm a sexual preference or gender identity? Why should an individual, child or adult, be excluded from counseling services based on their beliefs and request of care? Expanding options for mental health and sexual health care is needed because of the administrative rule created two years ago.

This bill is common sense. I ask the committee to support counseling services for questioning individuals that align with their values. I urge the committee to give HB 1332 a "Do Pass" recommendation.