



### Testimony Before House Public Health Care and Human Services Committee

Dr. Laura Knudtson, Member, Colorado Psychological Association

Re: HB 19-1129 – Prohibit Conversion Therapy for a Minor –2/13/2019

Chairperson, members of the committee. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify this morning. My name is Dr. Laura Knudtson and I am a Licensed Psychologist and a member of the Colorado Psychological Association. I will be testifying today in support of HB-1129. I would also like to inform the committee that both the Colorado Psychiatric Society and the Colorado Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Society asked CPA to share today that they also strongly support this bill.

As you are likely aware, the American Psychological Association along with every major medical/mental health group has released position statements that the practice of conversion therapy is ineffective. Decades of research have proven that it is not possible to change the sexual orientation of a person. Individuals that are marketing themselves as having the ability to change someone's sexual orientation are being dishonest and fraudulent. As a parent, I expect that the state will attempt to protect my family and my children from practices by licensed professionals that have great potential for harm. Colorado took action and banned rebirthing therapy. Similarly, I hope that the state would take action to ban sexual orientation change efforts. These emotionally abusive practices have been shown to increase symptoms of depression, anxiety, and suicidality and should not be utilized with vulnerable child populations.

As a child psychologist, I have worked with many adolescents – many of whom were “out” as LGBT, were in the process of coming out or were questioning their sexual identity. Children and adolescents are begging to have connections and interactions with adults that will listen to them, accept them for who they are and not judge them. This the true role of a therapist. The practice of therapy should be non-judgmental – particularly for adolescents who are trying to find their “true selves.” This bill will not prevent children from participating in a questioning process and it won't force them to be “gay” but will allow them to explore their own path without fear of being forced to condemn their true identity. I ask you to vote to prohibit this practice in the state of Colorado.