

STOP Gay Conversion Therapy – VOTE YES on HB1150

Senator Steve Fenberg's bill "Proactively Does This" (co-sponsor)

Thank you for allowing me to testify in this hearing.

I have been mortified that Republican Representatives in some states (Colorado introduced 3 times?) have introduced bills to allow Gay Conversion Therapy. This is Wrong !! HB1157 Proactively Protects Colorado Children from this Abuse. Gay Conversion Therapy Forced on Minors is Unconstitutional UnEthical Immoral – ALL Colorado Children Need to Be Protected from Those who Harm Children in this manner.

Conversion Therapy is dangerous to gay youth, it does not turn them straight, but it does cause depression and suicide. **Five states and Washington, D.C., have banned the practice.**

I have been exposed to discussions about troubled teens, & various mental health issues of boys and girls all my life. My Father, the late Dr. J G. Benedict, Ph. D Psychologist and Former head of the Colorado American Psychological Association, and former Head of Colorado State Fort Logan Mental Health Treatment Facility, and over 40 years in private practice. My Mother, Ms. Carol W. Benedict, was for over 40 years the Director of Education for Forest Heights Lodge in Evergreen CO, a home for mentally ill boys age 5 to 18 (as I recall).

As a Mother of two wonderful teenagers, I am sensitive to parents needs & rights to care for, guide and LOVE their children. I would never harm my children, nor would I allow others to knowingly harm ANY CHILD. We all know, Any Loving parent would not FORCE SEX on a child. I hope we all know LOVING PARENTS DO NOT FORCE DANGEROUS MENTAL HEALTH ABUSE LIKE GAY CONVERSION THERAPY on their child. A Loving parent allows their child to GROW UP AS THEY ARE & reach the age of consent (18), & independently make their own SEX Choices, and Life Choices. At 18yrs, most children are mature enough to make those choices & are old enough to understand the potential consequences both positive and negative.

In thinking about this & researching the FACTS & I've been moved by reading the testimony of several people from the March 1 HB1156 reading in Committee:

- 1) Esteban Lee O'Neil (a Mormon) told the committee he went through conversion therapy as an adult. "Conversion therapy is not where they try and turn heterosexuals into homosexuals," he said. "Conversion therapy is where they try and turn homosexuals into heterosexuals, and neither can be done."

Esteban participated in a program in Denver for 10 years with about 15 men. O'Neil said **five committed suicide "because of the abusive treatment we received."**

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- 2) Rep. Lois Landgraf, R-Colorado Springs, asked Rosenthal if his legislation was defining conversion therapy as child abuse.

Esteban replied “Rep. Landgraf, it is my opinion that it is **child abuse**,” Rosenthal replied. “It is a harmful practice to children, and therefore the state has a legitimate role in ensuring that no therapist practices it on children.”

- 3) Lawyers who support the ban told the committee it had withstood constitutional tests in other states.
- 4) Daniel Ramos, executive director of **One Colorado**, the state’s largest LGBTQ advocacy group, issued a statement about the bill:

“This bill would ban dangerous and discredited practices aimed at changing a young person’s sexual orientation or gender identity. This legislation will protect Colorado youth by prohibiting state-licensed and registered mental health care providers from practicing conversion therapy on youth under the age of 18. House Bill 1156 will help young people receive mental health care that is ethical and affirming.”

*“Every mainstream mental and medical professional association in the country has discounted so-called ‘conversion therapy.’ In Colorado, many major mental health organizations — including the **Colorado Psychological Association**, the Colorado Psychiatric Society, the Colorado Counseling Association, Colorado Behavioral Healthcare Council, Mental Health Colorado, and the National Association of Social Workers – Colorado Chapter — support House Bill 1156.*

*“These harmful practices use rejection, shame, and psychological abuse to force young people to try to change who they are. Unfortunately, many young people are coerced and subjected to these harmful practices, which put them at a higher risk for depression, substance abuse, and **suicide**.”*

*“**No young person should ever be shamed by a mental health professional into thinking that who they are is wrong. We can not allow one more young person to be targeted and hurt by these dangerous and discredited practices** and are hopeful House Bill 1156 will continue to progress through the legislature with bi-partisan support, as it has the last two years.”*

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How Many Children's Deaths Do you Want on Your Hands ?

Here's pertinent facts about the **Resulting Suicide of One Child** Who Killed herself because her parents ABUSED her with forced conversion therapy: (New York Magazine, "*Where the States Stand in the Fight to Ban Gay Conversion Therapy*", By Margaret Hartmann, April 9, 2015

"Leelah Alcorn, a 17-year-old transgender girl, killed herself December 2014 and said in a suicide note posted online that **religious therapists** tried to convince her she was a boy. But there was a push to ban the therapy at the state level even before Alcorn's tragic death. In the past three years, California, New Jersey, and the District of Columbia outlawed the treatment, and LGBT organizations are pushing other states to do the same. While the **American Psychological Association opposes the practice**, many state legislators say parents should have the option of giving their children "reparative therapy," and have quietly killed the bills." And Thusly, Republican State Legislators Helped to Kill more Children, including Leelah, only 17 !!

Your Decision is Quite Simple:

- A Republican Vote to KILL HB1156 is a Vote to KILL Children of Colorado.
- A Vote FOR HB1156 is a Vote to SAVE Children's Lives in Colorado.

Your Constituents are Watching !!!

We Vote ! We Organize Our Communities !

We are Patriots United & Indivisible !!

We Actively support Our Elected Officials...who support US.

Thank you for allowing me to testify in this hearing.

Thank you Senators for your Time.

Respectfully,

Becky Benedict

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