

The Barbara Bush
Children's Hospital

At Maine Medical Center



Testimony of Brandy Brown, LCSW,
Coordinator of the Gender Clinic at
the Barbara Bush Children's Hospital at Maine Medical Center,
In Strong Support of LD 912,
An Act to Clarify the Scope of Practice of Certain Licensed Professionals Regarding Conversion
Therapy

Senator Volk, Representative Fecteau and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor, Commerce, Research and Economic Development, I am Brandy Brown, Coordinator of the Gender Clinic at the Barbara Bush Children's Hospital at Maine Medical Center, and I am here today to testify in strong support of LD 912, An Act to Clarify the Scope and Practice of Certain Licensed Professionals Regarding Conversion Therapy.

The Gender Clinic at The Barbara Bush Children's Hospital is dedicated to supporting the health and wellbeing of transgender, gender diverse and questioning youth across Northern New England. We have a team providers within the Maine Health system, including Pediatric Endocrinologists, Child Psychiatrists, Clinical Social Workers and nurse practitioners, who work together to provide evidence based treatment to children and their families from childhood through adolescence. The Gender Clinic currently serves over 200 transgender and gender non-conforming youth in Maine.

I am the first contact for families after a referral has been made and I have the unique opportunity to hear the concerns of caregivers without obligation. Parents are worried, scared, and confused, but they want what is best for their children. During the course of my career, I have been asked by some if we can help their child realize it is a phase, or convince them to change their identity. These parents are in a vulnerable place and they need guidance and accurate information to help them with acceptance and support for their children.

In my experience of working with hundreds of LGBTQ youth I have never had a youth consider changing their identify or ask for help for in changing their identify unless they have experienced shame and coercion or they have been given an ultimatum and do not want to lose their family, faith, or community.

One such form of coercion is Conversion Therapy, which is used to convince someone that their understanding of their core identity is wrong and that they should change their identity by conforming to other's expectation. The essence of therapy is to create a safe place to allow someone to gain understanding, promote growth and build resilience. Conversion techniques take over the safety and turns therapy into a form of emotional abuse. Incredible damage is done.

Because of the damaged caused, Conversion Therapy is condemned by every major association representing medical and mental health, Including the American Academy of Pediatrics, the



American Psychiatric Association, the American Psychological Association, and the National Association of Social Workers, among others.

LGBTQ youth are already vulnerable to family rejection and experience homelessness, substance use, depression and suicide at higher rates than their peers and the State of Maine should not allow medical professionals to provide Conversion Therapy as it will only instill more fear and anxiety in this already vulnerable population. Conversion Therapy violates the fundamental medical ethic of “first, do no harm.” For those reasons, I urge the Committee to support LD 912 and protect our youth from these harmful practices.

Thank you for your time and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.