Opposition to HF16

My name is Paul Post, MD and I have practiced as a family physician in Minnesota for 40 years. As a physician, I am in opposition to HF16.

We are in an era when the current trend in medicine is to only practice evidence-based medicine. This bill seeks to ban “conversion therapy” which is a provocative, pejorative, and ill-defined term which attempts to lump all therapy that seeks to help an individual dealing with sexual orientation as a cruel form of aversive therapy. It is a jamming tactic that combines both anti-religious allusions (“conversion”, implicitly forced) along with intimidation against therapists who allow patient-directed investigation of possible change. There is very little evidence that the aversive form of therapy implied in the bill actually occurs in the setting of licensed behavioral therapists (1). In the past it has been done by some lay people, but there is no way to regulate these individuals anyway.

However, the medical literature does document tens of thousands of cases with appropriate therapy by licensed therapists where, with work on uncovering, exploring, and healing past wounds, many with SSA (same sex attraction) slowly develop OSA (opposite sex attraction) (2,3). Surprisingly, it does not go the other way (OSA to SSA). The lone exception to this is where OSA males were sexually molested and thus wounded by their male therapists (4).

If this bill is passed it would put a limit on treatment options available to patients and therapists. It would deprive adults and children of the freedom to set their own counseling goals and objectives and will likely drive some children and adults to suicide by forbidding therapy for underlying issues (5).

I urge you not to pass this bill.

I have included references for the studies I sited in my written testimony if you would like to check them.

R. Paul Post, MD, FAAFP

American Academy of Medical Ethics, Co-State Director

 1) Karten, E.Y., &Wade, J. C. (2010). Sexual orientation change efforts in men: A client perspective. The Journal of Men’s Studies, 18, 84-102.

2) Spitzer, R. L. “Can some gay men and lesbians change their sexual orientation? 200 participants reporting a change from homosexual to heterosexual orientation. Arch of Sexual Behavior, Vol 32, No. 5, Oct 2003, pp 403-417.

3) Successful Outcomes of Sexual Orientation Change Efforts, James E. Phelan (Phelan Consultants LLC, 2014).

4) Karl Benzio, MD, Board Certified Psychiatrist, testifying before Florida State Legislture.