



January 18, 2023

Dear Members of the Human Services Policy Committee,

On behalf of over 10,000 members of the Minnesota Medical Association, I am writing in support of HF 16, that prohibits the practice of so-called “conversion therapy” with children.

A long list of the nation’s preeminent organizations representing physicians and mental health practitioners have rightly recognized the potential dangers of conversion therapy, including the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, American Academy of Pediatrics, American Medical Association, American College of Physicians, and the American Psychiatric Association, just to name a few. These esteemed organizations long ago recognized that homosexuality and gender diverse identities are not pathological disease states, but rather variations of human sexuality. Conversion therapy presumes that something that is central to a person’s identity is wrong or abnormal. There is no scientific evidence to support a need for conversion therapy since we are not dealing with pathological conditions. The concept of conversion therapy lacks scientific credibility and clinical usefulness.

The research into so-called conversion therapy paints a clear picture of its potential harm, particularly to adolescents and young adults. Conversion therapy can lead to poor self-esteem, self-harm, guilt, anxiety, depression, and possibly suicide, all while being wholly ineffective in its intended purpose.

When adolescents question their sexual identity or gender, it is entirely appropriate for parents and guardians to seek counseling and assistance from mental health practitioners. Studies have demonstrated that gay and lesbian adolescents have higher rates of mental health concerns including depression and suicide than their heterosexual peers, and positive interventions can lead to resiliency and success in reaching stable, productive adult life.

Conversion therapy, however, is not the answer. It is coercive, dangerous, and ineffective. On behalf of the state’s physicians and physicians in training, I urge your support of HF 16.

Sincerely,

William Nicholson, MD
President, Minnesota Medical Association