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To Whom it May Concern,

Today I am here to unequivocally support the ban on conversion therapy in Minnesota. There are resources that we can provide families of queer youth to get to the root of the issue that are more effective, and support holistic wellbeing of all parties involved.

Right now, there is an overwhelming population of queer and trans youth coming to Queerspace Collective in Minneapolis looking for mentors. Queerspace Collective is an intergenerational mentorship program and non-profit organization in Minneapolis created to support queer youth where they are at in their identity journey. Youth tell us they felt delegitimized and isolated at home and in school and want someone to listen and support them. They tell us that gay and straight alliances in schools either don’t exist or school administrators want the students to lead the charge for themselves. We hear about bullying in schools and a lackluster commitment to gender pronouns from teachers and peers. We also hear from parents that are proud and wanting their child to feel supported by a LGBTQIA+ mentor and recently a desire from the parents to feel more educated on the topics themselves.

I’d like to believe that at its best, conversion therapy is an ill attempt at love. A love that while misplaced, recognizes that life as a queer person can be hard, and even dangerous societally. I believe that most parents and caregivers of queer youth are often overwhelmed because they want to protect their children from some of these risks; however, they lack essential verbiage and lived experiences to respond in appropriate and compassionate capacities. They see repression of sexual orientation or gender identity as safety and a solution and ultimately easier than changing systemic prejudices around them. My wish is that with the ban on conversion therapy that the state take a proactive approach to bring transparency to the efficacy and risks of this antiquated practice and connect families with more proven methods of supporting mental health for queer youth and family members. Some resources that changed my own life were access to queer therapists, gender-affirming care through the U of M Fairview system, and a connection to the greater queer community in Minneapolis through Queerspace Collective. Some examples are queer mentorship-based organizations like Queerspace, gender counseling such as Reclaim and Transforming Families Minnesota. The ultimate goal is to leave no parent or child behind and to create a safe space for people to voice concerns over the health of their child.

I feel confident that by banning conversion therapy for queer individuals in Minnesota that we can strengthen ties between families and communities and start to collectively heal from the harms of conversion therapy which has undercurrents of self harm before self help. Conversion therapy is a symptom of a larger issue that is called transphobia and homophobia.

I implore you to vote in support of HF3172 and ban conversion therapy in the State of MN.