



National Association of Social Workers

MINNESOTA CHAPTER

Representative Zach Stephenson, Chair
Commerce Finance and Policy
February 1, 2023

Chair Stephenson and Commerce Finance and Policy Committee Members,

On behalf of the National Association of Social Workers, MN Chapter (NASW - MN) and the MN Society for Clinical Social Work (Clinical Society), we are writing in support of House File 16, a bill prohibiting the practice of conversion therapy with children or vulnerable adults.

Clinical social workers (LICSW) make up the largest group of mental health providers in Minnesota. NASW - MN is the largest membership organization of professional social workers in our state, representing nearly 2000 social workers, and the Clinical Society is a professional group who advance the practice of clinical social work in Minnesota. Collectively, our organizations offer experience and expertise in mental health practice. We join other mental health professionals including psychologists, psychiatrists and licensed clinical counselors, in saying definitively that attempts to change sexual orientation is not only ineffective, it is dangerous and harmful to individuals. It has no place in mental health practice.

At its core, social workers value the dignity and worth of individuals. In contrast, conversion therapy sends the message that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer individuals are flawed who need to alter their true selves in order to join their communities. Furthermore, it inaccurately suggests that sexual orientation is a mental illness. This message is unacceptable for any Minnesotan to hear, and it is particularly irresponsible to impose it upon developing adolescents or other vulnerable people. Conversion therapy is irresponsible and unethical social work practice.

It is time to prohibit conversion therapy in law. Please support HF16. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Karen E. Goodenough, PhD, LGSW
Executive Director
NASW-MN

James Stoltz, LICSW, LADC
Legislative Committee
Clinical Society

Jenny Arneson, MSW, LGSW
Legislative Consultant
NASW-MN
Clinical Society