

Comment Report

SF 2037

A bill for an act prohibiting counties and cities from regulating certain behavioral health and human services.

Subcommittee Members: Green-CH, Guth, Quirmbach

Date: 01/17/2024

Time: 10:00 AM

Location: Room G15

Name: Wes Mullins

Comment: Dear Legislators, My name is Rev. Wes Mullins, and I am a survivor of Conversion Therapy. Now 43, from the ages of 16-21, I spent nearly \$30,000 of my own money (from waiting tables mostly) on Conversion Therapy. Beyond the sheer amount of money that those therapists took from such a young person, I was misled by these practitioners about the real ability of any therapy to change sexual orientation. No therapy has ever been proven effective at changing a person's sexual orientation. What has been proven over and over is the many ways that these types of therapies can cause harm. As my name and title above suggests, I am an ordained pastor. I am the Seminary valedictorian of Brite Divinity School at TCU, class of 2005. As such, I am a deeply religious person of Christian faith, and it was that same deep faith that led me pursue Conversion Therapy at the behest of religious leaders in my life who told me that my sexual orientation would cause God to send me to hell. To tell a pubescent teenager that their very selfhood is sinful and will condemn them to eternal torment (with no hope of forgiveness) is the exact kind of spiritual harm that Conversion Therapy rests on. In my five years of weekly treatment, every single participant in this therapy was there because of their religious concerns. Beyond the spiritual abuse and harm that is at the heart of Conversion Therapy, the therapy itself also inflicts a variety of other harm. From the extreme examples of shock therapy to less extreme examples like behavior modification, the entire process interrupts and prevents a person's ability to develop normal, healthy, and safe expressions of love and affection. This key developmental task of adolescence was delayed for a decade in my life because of the harm of this therapy, and I still deal with the ramifications of that more than 20 years later. Finally, in 2013, Exodus International, the largest Conversion Therapy organization in the United States, closed and apologized for the harm their organization had done. Here is a link to just one of many articles where you can read their own words about the harm that this therapy that they created caused:
<https://www.reuters.com/article/ususagayexodusidUSBRE95J0W020130620/This-therapy-may-seem-innocuous-even-helpful-but-it-is-dangerous-Please-do-not-be-fooled-Please-do-not-advance-this-bill-If-anything-we-should-join-with-other-states-across-the-country-who-have-banned-it-statewide-Again-please-do-not-advance-this-bill-By-doing-so-you-will-help-ensure-that-we-do-not-raise-another-generation-of-young-people-who-experience-the-kind-of-harm-that-I-endured-Thank-you-Rev.-Wes-Mullins>

Name: Sandy Wilson

Comment: Citizen Engagement declares IN Favor of SF2037.

Name: Archer Trip

Comment: Dear Legislators, I am a 21 year old who has freshly graduated from the University of Northern Iowa with a degree in Sociology, as well as minors within Women and Gender Studies and Religion. I am also a survivor of conversion therapy. My family

was very connected in our local church, to the point that my siblings and I were a part of a small youth group. Out of this youth group, five teens including myself, were assumed to be queer in one way or another. This allowed for the authorities within the church to change normal youth group lessons to extremist views and lessons that were based within homophobia and transphobia. These sessions went on every week, forcing every student to be specifically straight and cisgender. I feel as if it is my duty on behalf of them, as well as for all queer youth and other survivors of conversion therapy to share my story and stand against this bill. Conversion therapy does not work. After I was able to move away to college, I came out safely as a transgender man, and have worked for two years at the LGBTQ+ centers and coalitions within my town. In spite of the harm that was caused to me and many other survivors, I have always been queer. Conversion therapy does not work, and only causes harm and stress to anyone involved. We need to protect our children, our community, and our neighbors from this danger.

Name: Oliver Wenman

Comment: This bill helps protect people from unethical practices

Name: Brenda Masters

Comment: Forcing a child into conversion therapy is hurtful to the child and allowing cities to decide such things when their views are clearly taken from the pulpit and not any sort of care about the child's welfare should not be allowed.

Name: Megan Martin

Comment: I am not in favor of this bill; it will cause further harm to LGBTQ+ youth who are seeking care. All this will do will continue to drive people out of Iowa to seek the care they need and further reinforce the message that LGBTQ+ people aren't welcome here.

Name: Gretchen Lawyer

Comment: Local Government Subcommittee Members,I am writing in opposition to SF 2037 which would prohibit city and county governments from doing the work that their citizens have elected them to do. This bill runs counter to what is written on our Iowa seal "Our liberties we prize and our rights we will maintain." Local control has been central to our Iowa values within our citizenry. Local governments need to have the authority and autonomy over behavioral health, psychology and social work services, just as they do with all the other parts of city and county government. This bill would create more problems rather than solutions. Please vote against moving this bill out of subcommittee. Thank you,Gretchen Lawyer

Name: Jacquelyn Tracey

Comment: I oppose this bill.