

**Colorado Legislature**  
**House Public Health Care and Human Services Committee**  
**Testimony *Against* House Bill 18-1245 “Concerning a Prohibition**  
**Against a Mental Health Care Provider Engaging in Conversion**  
**Therapy with a Patient Under Eighteen Years of Age.”**

**Jeff Johnston**  
**Issues Analyst – Marriage, Gender and Homosexuality**  
**Public Policy Department**  
**Focus on the Family**  
**20 March 2018**

Good afternoon Mister Chairman and Members of the Committee.

My name is Jeff Johnston. I testify on my own behalf and on behalf of thousands of men and women who have left homosexuality and walked out of gender confusion. I also represent my wife and three sons – young men who would not exist if I had not walked away from homosexuality.

I work as a Marriage, Gender and Homosexuality Public Policy Analyst at Focus on the Family, so I also represent tens of thousands of our Colorado constituents.

This has become an annual Spring pilgrimage for me, driving up to the State Capitol to testify against banning therapy for minors with unwanted same-sex attractions or with unwanted gender identity struggles. I do this because I am vehemently opposed to this legislation.

This year, I thought it would be good to recap 12 things we’ve learned in the past four years as this bill keeps coming before the legislature:

1. **More than 20 states have voted *against* this legislation.** The Colorado Legislature, thankfully, has voted down this legislation three years in a row.

2. **Organizations representing more than 100,000 licensed mental health professionals oppose this legislation.**<sup>1</sup> While other groups may oppose sexual orientation change efforts, for ideological reasons, no counseling organization has forbidden members to perform therapy that helps clients live in alignment with their faith. None.
3. **Licensed mental health workers do not use force, abuse, shame or coercion.** If they do, their client could file an ethics complaint, and their licensing board could discipline them.
4. **For three consecutive years, nobody has brought forward any ethics complaints or standards violations against any licensed mental health professional in Colorado who practices any form of so-called “conversion therapy.”** No ethics complaints.
5. **For three years, proponents have said talk therapies have “been proven to be damaging,” and quoted statistics about LGBT youth depression and suicide.** Those statistics are *not* from a study of so-called “conversion therapy” but of a study in San Francisco of “Family Rejection.”
6. **This therapy ban is unique and unprecedented – it’s very different from “rebirthing therapies” which this state banned – because it seeks to ban the goals or outcome of the therapy, rather than a counseling methodology.** Proponents of this bill disagree with certain client outcomes, such as a minor choosing to walk away from homosexual identity and behaviors. They oppose gender-confused minors working in therapy to align their identity with their biological sex. Legislators are interfering with the complexities of clinical practice.

7. **For three years, none of the testimony has been from minors who were “harmed” in Colorado by so-called “conversion therapy.”** All those testifying were adults when they saw a therapist – I’ve only heard one person who was sent to a Cognitive Behavioral Therapist as a youth, and that was in another state, decades ago in the 70s or 80s.
8. **For three years, proponents have said such talk therapies have been proven to not work.** The truth is, there is great clinical and anecdotal evidence of change from homosexuality and gender dysphoria for many. In addition, there are *no* outcome based studies on youth who have experienced unwanted same-sex attractions and gender dysphoria and sought therapy to resolve their conflicts.
9. **Every mental health organization supports client autonomy and self-determination,** the client’s right to determine the course of treatment. This legislation takes that right away from minors.
10. **Every mental health organization acknowledges the importance of a client’s spiritual beliefs.** This bill interferes with the religious beliefs and freedom of minors who seek counseling help that aligns with their faith.
11. **This bill threatens parental rights.** Parents have the right and responsibility to make decisions concerning the care of their children, because they have their child’s best interest at heart. Under this bill, parents with a gender-confused five-year old could not work with a licensed mental health professional to help the child work toward congruence with bodily reality.
12. **This bill threatens religious freedoms.** There are no provisions for Christian counselors promoting a biblical sexual ethic.

This is really about competing worldviews. One ideology says homosexuality and transgenderism are innate and unchangeable; only “gay- or transgender-affirming” therapy should be allowed; and all who disagree must be silenced. This is ideology, not science. Research actually demonstrates a great deal of change and fluidity in both homosexuality and transgenderism.

On the other side is a religious or personal belief that says people should be free to choose to leave homosexuality or transgenderism. Do you support freedom? Or should the state force a certain belief on individuals? Are you tolerant of other viewpoints?

I urge you to vote against this bill and support free speech, religious freedom, parental rights, and client choice. Thank you. I’d be happy to take any questions.

---

<sup>1</sup> The following organizations represent over 100,000 licensed medical and mental health professionals: American Association of Christian Counselors, The Alliance for Scientific Integrity and Therapeutic Choice, Catholic Medical Association, American College of Pediatricians, International Network of Orthodox (Jewish) Mental Health Professionals, Freedom2Care, and the Christian Medical & Dental Associations.