March 7, 2017

Representative Jonathan Steinberg
Co-Chair, Joint Committee on Public Health
Legislative Office Building, Room 3000
Hartford, CT 06106

Senator Terry Gerratana
Co-Chair, Joint Committee on Public Health
Legislative Office Building, Room 3002
Hartford, CT 06106

Senator Heather Somers
Co-Chair Legislative Office Building, Room 3400
Hartford, CT 06106

RE: House Bill 6695, An Act Concerning the Protection of Youth from Conversion Therapy

Dear Chairman Steinberg, Chairwoman Gerratana and Chairwoman Somers,

On behalf of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), we are writing to express our strong support for HB No. 6695, An Act Concerning the Protection of Youth from Conversion Therapy, a bill that will protect young people and their families from dangerous and discredited practices aimed at changing a young person’s sexual orientation and/or gender identity or expression.

ADL, founded in 1913, is the leading human relations and civil rights organization, combating all forms of bigotry and discrimination. A critical element of ADL’s mission of seeking justice and fair treatment for all people compels us to combat every kind of bias and discrimination, advocating for all targeted groups.

Sexual orientation and gender identity change efforts, practiced through reparative or conversion therapy, are based on the false claim that being gay or transgender is a mental illness that needs to be cured. This view has been resolutely rejected as scientifically invalid for decades by the American Medical Association, the American Psychological Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the World Health Organization and other major mental health groups for decades.

Sexual orientation and gender identity change efforts are known to be extremely dangerous and can lead to depression, decreased self-esteem, substance abuse, homelessness and even suicidal behavior. Moreover, young people often experience these change efforts as a form of family rejection. Youth who are subject to family rejection, particularly lesbian, gay,
bisexual, and transgender youth, are at heightened risk for depression, substance abuse, and suicide. According to Dr. Mirta Roses Periago, Director of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), Regional Office for the World Health Organization, conversion therapy is “a serious threat to the health and well-being – even the lives – of affected people.”

For decades, our nation has ignored the detrimental effects of conversion therapy on youth, but not anymore. In recent years, state legislators and religious organizations have finally joined the medical community and have begun to take action. Six jurisdictions have enacted laws protecting youth from conversion therapy, with Vermont being the latest state to pass this law. Additionally, both the Ninth and Third Circuits have rejected attempts to challenge the California and New Jersey laws, holding that they are a valid exercise of states’ authority to protect public health and safety.

Furthermore, in May 2015, the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) encouraged CCAR members to “educate their communities and lawmakers” about the harmful effects of conversion therapy.

Medical and mental health professionals should provide care that is ethical, affirming, and culturally competent for young people. No young person should ever be shamed by a medical professional into thinking that who they are is bad. HB6695 puts the well-being of the Commonwealth’s youth first. We, therefore, urge the Joint Committee on Public Health to support and move forward this critical legislation.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Steve Ginsburg
Regional Director

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1 *Pickup v. Brown*, 740 F.3d 1208, 1236 (9th Cir. 2013).
2 *King v. Governor of the State of New Jersey*, 767 F.3d 216, 232-33 (3rd Cir. 2014).