Dear Senator Gerratana, Senator Somers, Representative Steinberg, and distinguished members of the Public Health Committee:

My name is Jessica Buchanan, and I am a concerned constituent residing in Branford, CT. I have worked as a victim advocate for victims of sexual violence, and continue to volunteer to ensure that reproductive justice and sexual health rights are upheld for all members of our wonderful state.

I am testifying in support of proposed **House Bill No. 6695** An Act Concerning the Protection of Youth from Conversion Therapy, which would make it impermissible for licensed health professionals to engage in discredited and harmful practices that seek to change a minor’s sexual orientation or gender identity—so-called conversion therapy.

Children and teenagers deserve to be loved and supported as they learn, grow, and discover their sexuality. If we refuse to accept minors as who they are as whole individuals, we are failing them as their providers and causing what could be irreparable harm. In fact, research demonstrates that lesbian, gay, and bisexual young adults who reported higher levels of family rejection, including admission to conversion therapy, were 8.4 times more likely to report having attempted suicide, 5.9 times more likely to report high levels of depression, 3.4 times more likely to use illegal drugs, and 3.4 times more likely to report having engaged in unprotected sex when compared to non-gay peers who reported no or low levels of family rejection.

I have several friends and family members who identify as LGBTQ and it hurts me to think health care providers could treat them as though they have a mental illness or as though something is inherently wrong with them based on their sexuality. Conversion therapy needs to stop now.

I implore you to support this bill that would make it impermissible for licensed health professionals to engage in discredited and harmful practices that seek to change a minor’s sexual orientation or gender identity. As part of the bill, any licensed health professional who practices this would be subject to discipline by the Department of Public Health.

The nation’s leading medical, mental health, and human services professional organizations reject conversion therapy as a legitimate practice, including the American Medical Association, the American Psychiatric Association, the American Psychological Association, and the National Association of Social Workers, among many others.

I strongly support HB 6695 and I hope the committee and Connecticut lawmakers will vote favorably to ensure that LGBTQ youth are protected from these harmful and discredited practices that can have devastating and long-lasting consequences.

Thank you for your time,

Jessica Buchanan
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