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**Testimony Presented to the Public Health Committee**

**March 7, 2017**

**House Bill 6695**

**AN ACT CONCERNING THE PROTECTION OF YOUTH FROM CONVERSION  
THERAPY**

Committee Chairs, Co-Chairs, Ranking Members, and members of the Public Health Committee, I appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony today in support of House Bill 6695, An Act Concerning the Protection of Youth from Conversion Therapy.

I want to thank the co-sponsors of this bill, and especially Senator Beth Bye and Representative Jeff Currey, for putting this bill forward. This bill has the support of over sixty-five legislators from both sides of the aisle and Governor Malloy.

It is not every day that we have the opportunity to discuss and pass a piece of proposed legislation that reinforces our widely held views that discrimination in any form against anyone, including against our LGBTQ community, is anathema to our values as a state. Conversion therapy, intended to change one's sexual orientation or gender identity or expression is fundamentally flawed. It presumes that being lesbian, gay, transgendered or expressing one's gender identity in a way that is viewed as different is an illness that requires intervention. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Professionally and personally, I have fought for our LGBTQ residents, who are our families and friends. I'm proud that our state has been a leader in same-sex marriage and adopting civil rights protections, including gender identity or expression, for our LGBTQ youth and adults. Conversion therapy runs against these protections and respect for our citizens. And where our vulnerable youth are concerned, the risk of such "therapy" can create major problems for our youth, including the increased risk of suicidal behaviors, depression, substance use and homelessness.

As you will hear today, many studies have shown that conversion therapy leads to increased health risks, some of which are based on family rejection.

Thank you for considering this bill and supporting our youth by rejecting conversion therapy for the youth of our state. I look forward to working with you on this legislation as it moves forward.