

JustUs Health is a nonprofit whose focus is on LGBTQ health, HIV, and aging in both contexts. Our main location is located in the St Anthony Park neighborhood, with a separate clinic located in the University-Summit neighborhood.

Among the populations we center are transgender individuals, including transgender minors. We have a history of successfully advocating for individual transgender minors who, for example, seek coverage for needed medical care through private insurance plans (e.g., a parent's workplace plan) or public plans (e.g., MA). Additionally, we have successfully advocated for systemic improvements which benefit transgender minors; last summer, we successfully concluded a multi-year project to arrange for MA to cover necessary medications, and this spring, secured an order directing the Minnesota Department of Human Services to include more services within the scope of its MA and Minnesota Care programs.

Working with transgender minors on the individual and "systems" level makes abundantly clear that these young people understand who they are, and dramatically benefit from having families, friends, schools, workplaces, communities, and health systems which support them in living in accordance with their gender identity. In contrast, we also know the harms that can be visited upon these minors when these or other actors are unsupportive, and seek to confine them to lives which are not their own. It is not a close call: practices which purport to force transgender minors to pretend to be cisgender minors are harmful, degrading, and ineffective in achieving the misguided goals they claim to set.

The ordinance under consideration takes an important step forward in recognizing the harm of so-called "conversion therapy" (note: it does not convert and is not therapeutic) when inflicted on minors. The harm is present when inflicted on adults, as well, but as a society, we largely accept the premise that adults may make bad decisions for themselves. We also recognize that there is a line beyond which a bad decision a parent or guardian makes for their child can become abusive, regardless of the justifications offered. These practices are on the wrong side of that line, and barring them within St. Paul sends an important message to practitioners and potential victims that such conduct will, ultimately, not be tolerated. We support this proposal and urge its adoption.

Phil Duran
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June 16, 2020

RE: Testimony regarding conversion

therapy Introduction: Name and
qualifications

Andy J. Johnson, Ph.D.

Education: AB in Psychology from Drury University (Disciples of Christ and United Church of Christ) MA, Ph.D. in Counseling Psychology from the University of Notre Dame (Roman Catholic)
APA Approved Internship: Pine Rest Christian Hospital (Christian Reformed)

Current Position: Associate Professor of Psychology at Bethel University (Pietist, Evangelical)

Past Member-at-Large, Division 36: Society for the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality of the American Psychological Association (APA)

Past Co-Chair, APA Division 36 Task Force on Religion and Poverty

Board Member, Co-Chair of the Action Team on Mentoring and Training of the National Partnership to End Interpersonal Violence (NPEIV)

(In short, I am familiar with the relationships between religion and psychology.)

Dear St. Paul City Council,

Legislation is needed to ban the practice of conversion therapy. This is not a matter of religion. This is a matter of putting an end to mental health malpractice.

I strongly support the ordinance before you to ban conversion therapy. Conversion therapy, also referred to as “reparative therapy” or “sexual orientation change efforts” (SOCE) refers to the efforts of mental health providers to try to change the sexual orientation or gender identity of an LGBT person. The bill before you protects the mental health of LGBT adolescents and adults from conversion therapy which research has demonstrated to be harmful and ineffective.

There is no scientifically rigorous evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of conversion therapy.

Scientific studies have found negative effects associated with conversion therapy, however, including increased levels of depression, suicidal thoughts, suicide attempts, and substance abuse in adults.

Recent research has found adolescents surviving conversion therapy to have less educational attainment in addition to the increased depression and suicide risk adult survivors of conversion therapy experience.

Conversion therapy is considered unethical and harmful mental health practice. Major health organizations with policy statements against the use of conversion therapy include but are not limited to the American Medical Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, the American Psychological Association, the American Psychiatric Association, the American Psychoanalytic Association, the American Counseling Association, and the National Association of Social Workers. Conversion therapy use among minors has also been condemned by a report submitted to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

In conclusion, my position is undergirded by scientific evidence and the medical principle of above all, or first, do no harm. Responsible, culturally competent practitioners should not engage in conversion therapy. I strongly encourage you to vote in favor of a conversion therapy ban. Approving this ordinance allows St. Paul to protect vulnerable populations from mental health malpractice.

Best regards,

Andy J. Johnson, Ph.D.
Andy J. Johnson, Ph.D.

Good morning,

My name is Morgan Bolstad and I am a St. Paul resident living in lowertown. I am emailing you today to beg you to ban conversion "therapy" for minors.

I am part of the LGBTQIA+ community, and I am well aware of what this horrible, outdated, and ineffective practice can do to members of my community that I love so much. This practice is more successful at making youth suicidal than it is at turning them into something they are not.

Queer youth should not be coerced into trying to change something about themselves that is not bad. We are people. We belong in society. We do not deserve to be subjected to this shameful practice that is driving kids to feel like they are undeserving of love, and therefore undeserving of life.

Please ban this practice, and literally save lives.

--

Morgan Bolstad

Good morning Councilmembers,

My name is Laura Lyons. I am a resident of St. Paul, and I fully support the proposed ban of conversion "therapy" that you will be discussing at today's City Council meeting.

Homosexual individuals already have higher rates of depression, suicide, bodily harm, etc., as they learn and accept their identity and begin redefining their position within their family, social circles, and society. To then have the threat of parents or other adults wanting to 'convert' them to heterosexual is a danger to some of our most vulnerable young citizens. Banning conversion 'therapy' is one step we can take to protect them.

Thank you for your time and effort,
Laura Lyons
1494 Kent St., St. Paul

Hello,

My name is Rachel Kennedy and I am a resident of St. Paul. I'm emailing to advocate for banning the practice of conversion therapy.

Every LGBTQIA+ life is precious and there is nothing to fix. They are beautiful as they are. Please publicly ban this horrific practice.

Sincerely,

Rachel
To whom it may concern,

Hello! My name is Elizabeth Lennartson, and I have been a St. Paul resident in Ward 1 for over two years now. It has been brought to my attention that you will be discussing conversion therapy during today's meeting.

I am asking that you vote to ban conversion therapy.

I am a straight, cisgender woman. I therefore have the privilege of not being judged, questioned, or scoffed at by whom I love and publicly show my affection toward. My LGBTQ+ friends do not experience the world in this same way and that is hurtful, disrespectful, and disappointing.

Additionally as a Christian woman, I am taught to love my neighbor as myself. This is regardless of sexual orientation, gender, race, etc. The thought of spiritual (and/or psychological) interventions being used against the LGBTQ+ community is downright disgusting. This is not what Jesus taught us.

Our LGBTQ+ brothers and sisters deserve better, and they need you to show up for them.

Thank you,
Elizabeth Lennartson

Hello Council Members,

My name is Michaela, and I am a Saint Paul resident. I am thrilled that you will be banning conversion therapy with this new ordinance. By passing this ordinance, it is a step toward ending it completely. Conversion therapy is a harmful practice that is proven to be ineffective and not rooted in real science. It is my hope that by banning it in Saint Paul, momentum can build for getting a ban in other cities, and then statewide.

Thank you for your time,

Michaela Leach

Dear Council member Prince,

Conversion Therapy is a dangerous practice that contributes to self hate and self harm of our children. Saint Paul MUST ban this ugly practice that causes irreparable harm. We in Saint Paul need to spend our time and energy supporting, loving and embracing our children not trying to destroy them.

Please speak in support of Ordinance 20-15, "Prohibition of Conversion Therapy Directed to Minors" to show our young people that you care about and value them.

Thank you for your support,
Monica Hynds

Hello Council,

I am pleased to be able to speak with you today.

I am writing to you today concerning Ord 20-15: Prohibition of Conversion Therapy Directed to Minors. This measure is so important. I am a teacher and have been working as an educator with young people for many years. It has been a gift and an honor to me to act as a guide to them as they make their way into adulthood, fulfilling their goals and dreams and finding their place in the world.

One of the key aspects of being an educator, and indeed of being any adult in a child's life, is recognizing that children are all wonderful, beautiful people in their own right who we are there to facilitate in fulfilling their potential and meeting their goals. They are not inanimate objects that we have the right to craft into whatever we want them to be, and acting as if they are is harmful both to them and to ourselves.

Conversion Therapy operates under the assumption that a child's inherent being can be changed and that it is our right to do so if we wish. If a child is gay and we do not like it, we have the right and ability to change it.

However, a child's inherent being is not ours to change. It is immutable and feelings of entitled to alter a child this way, resulting in attempts to change a child, a damaging beyond all words. At the very least, it can result in the child feeling as if something is wrong with them as if they needed to be changed. At worst, the child may be driven to suicide.

Because of this, I strongly urge that Conversion Therapy directed at minors be banned. All children have the right to be loved and supported as they are, to know that they, at their core, are valuable. No structure such as "Conversion Therapy" should exist that tells either children or parents that they are not.

Thank you.

-Lara Adair