



## The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
STATE HOUSE, BOSTON 02133-1054

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June 6, 2017

Honorable Kay Khan, House Chair  
Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities  
State House, Room 146  
Boston, MA 02133

Honorable Jennifer L. Flanagan, Senate Chair  
Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities  
State House, Room 312-D  
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Chairwoman Khan, Chairwoman Flanagan and Members of the Committee:

I write to you in support of H.1190/S.62, *An Act relative to abusive practices to change sexual orientation and gender identity in minors*.

Youth across the Commonwealth are currently being subjected to so-called "conversion" or "reparative" therapy that aims to change an individual's sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Instead of proving to be a helpful resource to cope with questions and insecurities regarding gender and sexuality, this practice is harmful to the mental and physical health of minors.

Minors subjected to conversion therapy experience higher rates of depression, anxiety, self-destructive behavior and suicide.<sup>1</sup> It can be emotionally and psychologically traumatizing for any individual but particularly adolescents, who are in a vulnerable stage in their lives. For these reasons, the nation's leading professional health care associations universally condemn conversion therapy.

H.1190/S.62 would prohibit licensed mental health or human services professionals from using therapeutic practices to change a minor's sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. Mental health professionals, including licensed social workers, psychologists, psychiatrists, and other state-licensed professionals have a medical and ethical responsibility to their patients not to engage in these harmful, discredited practices. Such professionals have an obligation to assist their patients in grappling with questions of sexual orientation and gender identity in a healthy and medically sound manner, not one that fosters an environment of prejudice and discrimination.

Given the rollback of protections for LGBT\* youth at the federal level, the time to act is now.

Currently, similar legislation has been passed in California, Connecticut, Oregon, Nevada, New Jersey, Washington D.C., Illinois, Vermont and New Mexico. Massachusetts has a long, strong history of protecting the rights of the LGBT community and I believe passing this bill is a necessary next step to continue that trend.

For all these reasons, I respectfully request that the Committee adopt a favorable report for H.1190/S.62 as expeditiously as possible. Thank you for your consideration on this important matter.

Respectfully,



Mike Connolly

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<sup>1</sup> LGBT Policy Spotlight: Conversion Therapy Bans / Ryan, Caitlin, et al. "Family rejection as a predictor of negative health outcomes in white and Latino lesbian, gay, and bisexual young adults." *Pediatrics* 123.1 (2009): 346-352. LGB teens 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 LGB peers that reported no or low levels of family rejection.