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Dear Members of the General Government and Social Services Committee:

I am writing to offer my strong support the proposed LGBTQ Youth Mental Health Protection Ordinance up for consideration within your committee. This ordinance is essential to ensuring that LGBTQ youth are not subjected to unethical and harmful mental health interventions that have been linked to significant long-term negative consequences. I will first address my qualifications to write this letter of support.

I am a licensed clinical psychologist in the state of Kentucky and am an assistant professor of clinical psychology at the University of Kentucky. I have over 12 years of experience providing evidence-based mental health care and am currently the co-director of the University of Kentucky Clinic for Emotional Health, where I provide and supervise the provision of evidence-based trauma-informed treatments for posttraumatic stress disorder. In addition to obtaining a PhD in clinical psychology, I completed a clinical internship and postdoctoral fellowship specializing in research and treatment of adults and youth who have experienced various forms of trauma at the National Crime Victims Research and Treatment Center at the Medical University of South Carolina.

Conversion therapy is a widely discredited approach toward psychosocial intervention that has been strongly denounced by virtually all leading scientific and practice organizations that oversee the professional delivery of mental health services including the American Psychological Association, the American Medical Association, the American Psychiatric Association, the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and many others. These organizations have taken a strong stand against conversion therapy based on a robust and ever growing body of evidence demonstrating that 1) sexual and gender identity are not mental disorders to be changed or “cured”, 2) efforts to change sexual or gender identity are not effective, and 3) such efforts can lead to significant and long-lasting mental health problems including depression, sexual dysfunction, impaired self-esteem, and suicide. Conversion therapy is often practiced by individuals who are not licensed mental health professionals. Just as we would not condone the practice of medicine without a license, neither should we condone unqualified and untrained individuals from engaging in psychosocial interventions that have been shown to predict long-lasting harm to youth in our community.

It is our duty to protect the safety and well-being of youth who are not in a position to protect themselves. As such, the only ethical way to proceed is to take a strong stance against the harmful practice of conversion therapy. For these reasons and many others, I am asking you to support the proposed LGBT Youth Mental Health Protection Ordinance.

Sincerely,

Christal L. Badour

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