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389 Waller Avenue, Suite 100, Lexington, KY, 40504

[www.pcsoky.org](http://www.pcsoky.org)

(859)253-3233

February 19, 2020

Mayor Linda Gorton  
Urban County Council  
200 East Main Street  
Lexington, KY 40507

Dear Mayor Gorton and Urban County Council Members:

“Conversion therapy” also known as “reparative therapy” is the dangerous practice of trying to change someone’s sexual orientation or gender identity through a variety of disproven and harmful methods. Currently, in Kentucky it is perfectly legal to engage in and to promote this type of “therapy” that is more akin to torture. While the practice, based on outdated notions and bigotry, is harmful to all who undergo it, youth are especially vulnerable to its dangers, as they are often forced to attend by parents or guardians who are unaware of the lasting damage it may cause.

At Pride Community Services Organization (PCSO), our mission is to improve the lives of LGBTQ+ people in Central and Eastern Kentucky. In doing this work, we have heard multiple stories of those surviving and recovering from conversion attempts when they were children and teenagers. The anguish created by such experiences leaves long-lasting scars and can result in anxiety, depression, stress, substance abuse, homelessness, and suicidality. Our first-hand knowledge of the negative impact of conversion practices is born out in national data. According to The Trevor Project, 42% of “conversion therapy” survivors have attempted or seriously considered suicide in the past year. San Francisco State University found that survivors of conversion practices are 3.4 times more likely to use illegal drugs and are 5.9 times more likely to report high levels of depression. Quite simply, conversion practices threaten the health, well-being, and very lives of LGBT people, not only when being actively administered, but for years afterward.

There are 57 known LGBT conversion practitioners in Kentucky with 7 of those being in Fayette County. These practitioners represent a serious threat to LGBT people, especially to LGBT youth, in our community. Allowing an environment where LGBT youth can be told by professionals that they can be cured, or even that there is anything about them that needs to

*Creating Safe, Inclusive Spaces Where Every LGBTQ+ Kentuckian is Celebrated and Supported*



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be cured, is irresponsible. Conversion practices have been condemned by all major national and international professional boards in the medical and psychological community including The American Psychological Association, American Psychiatric Association, American Medical Association, American Academy of Family Physicians, American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Kentucky Medical Association, and the Kentucky Mental Health Coalition. In addition, 20 states & the District of Columbia and 70 local governments including the Cities of Covington and Louisville in Kentucky have banned conversion therapy for minors.

Lexington leaders have the responsibility and the opportunity to protect LGBT Youth by following these examples. To this end, PCSO wholeheartedly supports the proposed “LGBT Youth Mental Health Protection Ordinance.” We believe this ordinance will be a step in creating a brighter future for Fayette County’s LGBT youth. Not only will it have a direct impact on those in danger of undergoing conversion practices, but it will send a strong message of support to all LGBT youth in our communities. PCSO calls on Lexington and Fayette County to show up for LGBT youth by adopting this protective ordinance.

Sincerely,

Carmen Wampler-Collins  
Executive Director