

**The Rev. Laurie M. Brock
St. Michael the Archangel Episcopal Church
2025 Bellefonte Drive
Lexington, Kentucky 40503**

4 February 2021

Lexington-Fayette Urban County Council
c/o Councilperson Susan Lamb, Fourth District
200 East Main Street
Lexington, KY 40507

via email

RE: Support for LGBTQ+ Youth Mental Health Protection Ordinance

Dear Members of the Lexington-Fayette Urban County Council,

As a citizen of Lexington and a leader in the faith community, I write in support of the LGBTQ+ Youth Mental Health Protection Ordinance to ban conversion therapy in Lexington. I have been rector of St. Michael the Archangel Episcopal Church for over a decade, and in that time, I have worked faithfully with the civic leaders of Lexington on issues to create a city and community that is more welcoming, safer, and more flourishing for all who live here. Many times, the decisions and actions to guide these changes in our community have been difficult and not without controversy. But love is always worth the struggle.

The legacy of our city, state, and country is, sadly, too often one of communities that are safe for a select population. Throughout our history, those who are Black, women, poor, refugees, immigrants, Native Americans, People of Color, differently abled, and LGBTQ+ have all been subjected to discrimination, hate, violence, and exclusion.

And yet, our better angels have still encouraged us to see beyond bias and prejudice. We have worked to acknowledge our past injustices and continue to work to repair the wounds as we create a city that continues to model hope, welcome, love, and compassion.

Our communities often hold up safety as a measure of being a compassionate community. While many factors contribute to a flourishing community, safety is indeed a factor. The reality for too many of our LGBTQ+ youth is that they are not safe. The Trevor Project (www.thetrevorproject.org) shares heartbreaking statistics

regarding the health and well-being of LGBTQ+ youth and the danger far too many of them face simply because of who they are. Many of these dangers can be mitigated by the actions of local civic leaders.

One of the significant assaults on the safety of LGBTQ+ youth is conversion therapy. There is no doubt that this practice is abusive and dangerous. It has been summarily discredited by a long list of scientific organizations, and several faith traditions including my own Episcopal Church recognize conversation therapy as incompatible with God's call to love our neighbors.

My congregation and my diocese, which consists of 34 faith communities in the eastern half of Kentucky, recognize our duty as Christians to love God, love our neighbor, and to love ourselves. A basic facet of love is creating safe places, especially for our children and youth. To allow such a damaging and discredited practice to continue in our community is a clear message that the well-being and lives of our youth are not important. To allow it to continue in our community is not a loving act.

Banning conversion therapy in the City of Lexington is a loving act, a just act, and a compassionate act. Doing so takes another step on our journey to be a city where all people are safe and loved.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Laurie M Brock +".

The Rev. Laurie M. Brock
Rector