

To Whom It May Concern,

The undersigned organizations are pleased to support legislation protecting youth under the age of 18 from so-called “conversion therapy” in states across the country.

As organizations committed to fighting for reproductive justice for all people, we have a particular interest in this bill. Reproductive justice is based on the principle that everyone should have access to the resources that give them freedom to decide whether, when, and how to parent children – with dignity, free from discrimination, coercion, and violence.¹ Reproductive justice has many intersections, including how individuals identify and experience gender and sexuality, and we strongly believe that all people should be free from coercive efforts to undermine self-acceptance or change an individual’s identity or expression.

As reproductive justice advocates, we have a unique understanding of the dangers that arise when healthcare decisions are based upon unsupported evidence that lacks scientific validity. We strongly oppose any efforts to allow people seeking healthcare to be subjected to unscientific methods that will harm rather than help them.

These bills prevent mental health providers licensed by the state from performing conversion therapy with a patient under 18 years of age, regardless of the willingness of a parent or guardian to authorize such efforts. As organizations that believe in reproductive justice, this bill is important to us. We understand the dangers that can arise when youth are forced or coerced into decisions about their sexuality, and we hope this bill will help LGBTQ youth avoid those dangers.

Encouraging young people to fully embrace their identities surrounding gender and sexuality is an important issue to the reproductive justice movement and one to which we are dedicated. This bill will curb harmful practices known to produce lifelong damage to those who are subjected to them and help ensure the overall health and safety of LGBTQ youth. We thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

Advocates for Youth

Forward Together

Institute for Science and Human Values

National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health

National Network of Abortion Funds

National Organization for Women

National Women’s Health Network

Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS)

¹ *Vision*, LAW STUDENTS FOR REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE, <http://lsrj.org/motivation/> (last visited Jan. 6, 2014).