



March 2, 2022

Members of the Preventative Health Policy Division
State Office Building
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Re: OPPOSE HF 2156

Dear Members,

Minnesota Family Council represents tens of thousands of families across the state, and we **urge you to oppose HF 2156**.

The proposed “conversion therapy” ban is in fact a threat to the ability of all Minnesotans to set their own therapeutic goals and to receive the counseling they believe is right for them. It interferes directly in the relationship between mental health professionals and patients, and it would limit the rights of parents and children to seek appropriate care.

Proponents of the bill deceptively highlight methods and practices (which they label “conversion therapy”) that have long ceased to exist in the world of professional mental health care. By employing such vague terminology, proponents seek to ban constitutionally protected talk therapy whereby a licensed counselor listens to a client to help them achieve the client’s self-selected goals, which may include seeking to live in accordance with one’s religious beliefs regarding sexuality or identity.

Under this legislation, a licensed counselor in Minnesota would risk prosecution for fraud if she gave professional help to a 17-year-old girl who, following a period of confusion about her gender identity, wanted help to live in accordance with her sex. Furthermore, a faith-based ministry would violate the consumer fraud portion of the bill if it held a ticketed conference encouraging attendees to avoid homosexual behavior. A pastor speaking at such a conference could be prosecuted for encouraging attendees that they can prevail over unwanted same-sex desires or feelings of being born in the wrong sex. These examples show how this bill represents a clear threat to constitutionally protected religious speech.

In the 2018 *NIFLA v. Becerra* ruling, the Supreme Court held that, “This Court has not recognized ‘professional speech’ as a separate category of speech. Speech is not unprotected merely because it is uttered by ‘professionals.’ In a concurring opinion, Justice Anthony Kennedy wrote that “Governments must not be allowed to force persons to express a message contrary to their deepest convictions. Freedom of speech secures freedom of thought and belief. This law imperils those liberties.”

If the state of Minnesota were to pass this legislation, it would harm patients, mental health professionals, churches, and families. As the bill threatens the constitutional freedoms of speech and religion, it would immediately be challenged by legal organizations on potent 1st Amendment grounds. All Minnesotans have the right to choose the counseling that is appropriate for them without government interference. HF 2156 poses an unacceptable threat to individual freedom, and it should be opposed.

Sincerely,
Rebecca Delahunt
Assistant Director of Public Policy