

Craig, Sondra

From: Elsen, Nikki
Sent: Tuesday, May 31, 2022 9:09 AM
To: Craig, Sondra
Subject: FW: [SPAM] 22-0636: AN ORDINANCE to create Sec. 32-191 of the Code of Ordinances of the City of La Crosse prohibiting Conversion Therapy.

Importance: Low

From: Melissa Hellwig <mhellwig@thetherapyplacelax.com>
Sent: Monday, May 30, 2022 3:25 PM
To: Elsen, Nikki <Elsenn@cityoflacrosse.org>; Reynolds, Mitch <reynoldsm@cityoflacrosse.org>; Alesha Schandelmeier <aleshas@7riverslgbtq.org>
Subject: [SPAM] 22-0636: AN ORDINANCE to create Sec. 32-191 of the Code of Ordinances of the City of La Crosse prohibiting Conversion Therapy.
Importance: Low

*** **CAUTION:** This email originated from an external sender. **DO NOT** click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe. ***

Dear City Council Members,

I practice psychotherapy in La Crosse. One of my specialty areas is the mental health care of LGBTQ+ identifying people. I'm writing to address the need for a city-wide ban on anything related to conversion therapy, which is the effort to therapeutically "convert" or change someone's sexual orientation or gender identity. The evidence (and there is A LOT of it) is clear--any form of conversion therapy is actually harmful to the mental, physical, and emotional well-being of an individual.

NAMI (The National Alliance on Mental Illness) states on their website that "no one should be subject to practices that can cause or worsen mental health symptoms. NAMI supports public policies and laws to ban the discredited, discriminatory, and harmful practice of conversion therapy."

The Human Rights Campaign identifies "reparative" or conversion therapy as a dangerous practice that targets those who are trying to address needs and distress around sexual orientation and gender identity. They also identify 22 US states or territories that have already banned conversion therapy due to the known harm it can cause.

The Human Rights Campaign also shares that one of the most concerning and well-documented risks is that of suicide. Those who identify as LGBTQ+ already have an increased risk of suicide due to social/family rejection, safety concerns, and having fewer legal rights. That risk increases by at least three for those who engage in conversion therapy, especially when coerced or forced by others such as family or religious groups.

I have included below the 4-part American Psychiatric Association official position statement regarding conversion therapy from 2018:

1. APA reaffirms its recommendation that ethical practitioners refrain from attempts to change individuals' sexual orientation.

2. APA recommends that ethical practitioners respect the identities for those with diverse gender expressions. © Copyright, American Psychiatric Association, all rights reserved

3. APA encourages psychotherapies which affirm individuals' sexual orientations and gender identities.

4. APA encourages legislation which would prohibit the practice of "reparative" or conversion therapies that are based on the a priori assumption that diverse sexual orientations and gender identities are mentally ill.

Again, the evidence and professionals in the field as well as national and international professional organizations all agree--conversion therapy is dangerous and harmful. Please support banning conversion therapy in The City of La Crosse.

Sincerely,

**Melissa Hellwig, MS, LPC, PMH-C
Owner and Psychotherapist
The Therapy Place of La Crosse**