



AMERICAN COUNSELING
ASSOCIATION

Your Passion. Your Profession. Our Purpose.

February 24, 2014

The Honorable Janice K. Brewer
Arizona Governor
Executive Tower
1700 West Washington Street
Phoenix, AZ 85007

Dear Governor Brewer:

I write to you today to request that you veto S.B. 1062.

As President of the American Counseling Association, the largest association for professional counselors in the United States with 1,345 members in Arizona (and 55,000 across the United States), I have a duty to promote and uphold our professional ethics code – the ACA Code of Ethics. This code prohibits Licensed Professional Counselors in Arizona from refusing to treat a person on the basis of the counselor's religious values. As mental health professionals, counselors have a duty to ensure that the well-being of our clients is met. As such, a professional counselor's personal values cannot play a factor in the treatment of an individual, couple or family. A client's need to be accepted unconditionally is more important than a counselor's need to express their personal beliefs.

S.B. 1062 is wholly incompatible with the practices of the counseling profession. The Arizona regulating body for Licensed Professional Counselors, the Arizona Board of Behavioral Health Examiners, has adopted the ACA Code of Ethics for adjudicating complaints against licensed counselors in your state. Since, as previously noted, S.B. 1062 conflicts directly with the ACA Code of Ethics, enactment of this legislation would jeopardize the licenses of over thirteen hundred of your constituents. The inherent conflict between S.B. 1062 and the adjudication system based on the ACA Code of Ethics would also cause chaos for the Arizona Board of Behavioral Health Examiners.

I would ask you to consider the following. Would it be ethical for a doctor to refuse to treat a patient in the emergency room because the patient did not have the same religious beliefs as the doctor? Is it ethical to jeopardize that patient's life due to the physician's religious or personal beliefs? When you consider that many of our Licensed Professional Counselors work with both adults and children who are at risk to do harm to themselves, you are essentially putting them in that situation.

Because of the reasons listed above, I implore you—on behalf of our 1,300 Arizona members and 55,000 members nationwide—to reject S.B. 1062.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Cirecie West Olatunji".

Cirecie West Olatunji, Ph.D
President
American Counseling Association