



AMERICAN COUNSELING
ASSOCIATION

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Senate Health and Human Services Committee
Room 101, Legislative Office Building
107 North Main Street
Concord, New Hampshire 03301

April 5, 2016

Subject: Support House Bill 1661

Dear Committee Members:

As the nation's largest professional association representing over 56,000 professional counselors, the American Counseling Association (ACA) urges your support of HB 1661, a bill to prevent so-called conversion therapy on minors.

Today, we join a number of professional organizations and consumer groups in expressing our support for HB 1661 given our long-standing policy against the practice of this bogus "therapy." Conversion therapy is not congruent with the American Counseling Association's Code of Ethics - the ethical code for the profession of counseling - as the effects of efforts to change sexual orientation have been found to cause damage to individuals. A basic principle across all health professions, including mental health, is to do no harm and the practice of "conversion therapy" can be extremely damaging.

The American Psychological Association (APA) report entitled, *Appropriate Therapeutic Responses to Sexual Orientation* was based on a systematic review of the research on sexual orientation change efforts – 83 studies in all. The report concluded that, "efforts to change sexual orientation are unlikely to be successful and involve some risk of harm." The report documented that up to 50% of participants in conversion therapy reported harmful effects from the attempt to change their sexual orientation.

The APA report said that, "same-sex sexual attractions, behavior and orientations per se are normal and positive variants of human sexuality-in other words, they do not indicate either mental or developmental disorders." All major mental health professions, including counseling, psychiatry, psychology, social work, and marriage and family therapy have endorsed this position. As such, there is nothing to "repair" in an individual with same-sex attraction.

By supporting HB 1661, you will prevent New Hampshire's youth from being subjected to a very painful and damaging experience. Should you have any questions, please contact the American Counseling Association's government affairs department via email at gtodd@counseling.org or at 703-823-9800 X354.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard Yep".

Richard Yep, CAE, FASAE
Chief Executive Officer