



Pennsylvania Psychiatric Society

The Pennsylvania District Branch of the
American Psychiatric Association

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The Honorable Members of Allentown City Council
435 Hamilton Street
Allentown, PA 18101

Dear Esteemed Council member:

On behalf of the Pennsylvania Psychiatric Society (PaPS/Society) and our local chapter, the Lehigh Valley Psychiatric Society (LVPS), we are pleased to provide our thoughts on the use of conversion therapy in light of potential changes to your Public Health Code seeking to address the prohibition of the practice of conversion therapy within the city limits.

The American Psychiatric Association (APA) and the PaPS have always taken clear stands against discrimination, prejudice and unethical treatment on a variety of issues, including discrimination based on sexual orientation. Therefore, the APA and PaPS strongly oppose conversion therapy. Conversion therapy is based upon the assumption that homosexuality per se is a mental disorder or based upon the a priori assumption that a patient should change his/her sexual homosexual orientation.

The APA created a position statement in 2000 which states that... "Psychotherapeutic modalities to convert or 'repair' homosexuality is based on developmental theories whose scientific validity is questionable. Furthermore, anecdotal reports of 'cures' are counterbalanced by anecdotal claims of psychological harm. In the last four decades, 'reparative' therapists have not produced any rigorous scientific research to substantiate their claims of cure. Until there is such research available, the APA recommends that ethical practitioners refrain from attempts to change individuals' sexual orientation, keeping in mind the medical dictum to first, do no harm. The potential risks of reparative therapy are great, including depression, anxiety and self-destructive behavior, since therapist alignment with societal prejudices against homosexuality may reinforce self-hatred already experienced by the patient."

The mission of the Society is to fully represent Pennsylvania psychiatrists in advocating for their profession and their patients, and to assure access to psychiatric services of high quality, through activities in education, shaping of legislation and upholding ethical standards. It is of utmost importance for us to uphold this statement and to fight for injustice for those facing undue discrimination, stigma and bias across the commonwealth. Banning the use of conversion therapy for minors or those unable to determine their own path is the right thing to do and upholds the oath we took the moment we became physicians. We encourage your thoughtful consideration of opposing any policy that directly or indirectly causes psychological harm to those citizens within your catchment area.

Sincerely,

Dominic L. Mazza, MD, DLFAPA
President, PaPS

John Paul Gomez, MD
President, LVPS

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