



Human Rights Committee –Introduced

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- Aditi Rao
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SOCE Ban Position
By Rao

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Position Statement:

SIYAC supports legislation pertaining to banning sexual orientation change efforts for minors

Position

It is the Position of the State of Iowa Youth Advisory Council that legislation calling for the banning of sexual orientation change efforts by practicing mental health providers for minors in Iowa be enacted.

Rationale

According to the American Psychological, sexual orientation change efforts (SOCE) is “*a cohesive category that encompasses any attempt by a mental health professional to change sexual orientation*” which is “*based upon the assumption that homosexuality per se is a mental disorder, or based upon a prior assumption that the patient should change his/ her homosexual orientation.*” SOCE involves methods ranging from psychological to physical invasive methods aimed solely at erasing one’s sexuality or gender beliefs.

The issue of SOCE has been plaguing lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) youth across the United States. A study done by Doctor Caitlin Ryan, an expert in the field of LGBTQ mental health showed that “*a little more than one-third (34%) [of LGBTQ people] report having been sent outside the home to a therapist or religious leader to “cure, treat, or change your sexual orientation” during their teenage years.*” [1] Despite the prevalence of SOCE in the country, there has been no scientific proof behind the effectiveness of the therapy. Further more, the majority of those exiting SOCE programs face significant mental health issues later in life. A task force, made up of mental health, biology, psychology, and psychiatry experts, set up by the American Psychological Association showed that “*Recent studies provide no sound scientific basis for determining the impact of SOCE on decreasing same-sex sexual attraction.*” The taskforce’s work also showed that many who go through SOCE “*report experiencing serious distress, including depression, identity, confusion, and fear due to the strong prohibitions of their faith regarding same- sex sexual orientation, behaviors, and relationships.*”[2]

Since 2012, two states, California and New Jersey, have outlawed SOCE practices by mental health and psychiatry practitioners, while seven other states (Hawaii, Minnesota, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Vermont, and Massachusetts), and the District of Columbia, pursue similar legislation.

Recommended Action

To disrupt a minor’s life in order to place them in therapy aimed at changing their sexual orientation and gender expression through proven ineffective, harmful methods is a human rights violation. SIYAC encourages the consideration of a bill aimed at banning sexual orientation change efforts for minors in Iowa by mental health providers in order to deal with the issue. This bill would not affect religious practices or therapy aimed at self-acceptance, but rather at therapy aimed only at changing a minor’s sexual orientation and gender expression. This bill would also define homosexuality as something that cannot be changed, and has no need to be. This bill will also help identify and deal with mental health providers who commit proven harmful actions against their patients, and deal with them through the law. By supporting this bill, the state of Iowa would be leading the charge in a human rights issue that plagues thousands of youth across the nation, thus creating a safer environment and community for all youth in Iowa, regardless of sexual orientation.

We hope you will consider these positions and pass this piece of legislation, and put the youth of Iowa ahead of partisan politics.

Sources:

1- California. Hearings on the Declaration of Caitlin Ryan. Testimony of Caitlin Ryan. 2012 Leg. ECF-41. N.p.: n.p., n.d. Print.

2- "Appropriate Therapeutic Responses to Sexual Orientation." American Psychological Association: n. pag. Print.