

April 5, 2018

The Honorable Mark Stone
Chair, Committee on Judiciary
1020 N Street, Room 104
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 2943 (Low) – SUPPORT

Dear Assemblymember Stone,

The California LGBT Health and Human Services Network is pleased to support AB 2943 by Assemblymember Evan Low, which codifies and makes explicit in California law that sexual orientation change efforts, also known as “conversion therapy” or “reparative therapy,” is a fraudulent business practice under the Consumer Legal Remedies Act.

The California LGBT Health and Human Services Network is a statewide coalition of over 60 non-profit providers, community centers, and researchers working collectively to advocate for state level policies and resources that will advance LGBT health. We strive to provide coordinated leadership about LGBT health policy in a proactive, responsive manner that promotes health and wellness as part of the movement for LGBT equality.

For far too long, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) people have suffered psychological abuse by those who are entrusted to care for their emotional and psychological well-being. The dangerous practices of sexual orientation change efforts, also frequently called “conversion therapy” or “reparative therapy,” have no sound scientific basis and can cause lifelong damage. Courts in California and elsewhere have already recognized that the practice of conversion therapy is a deceptive practice that violates existing consumer fraud laws. This bill would codify that established law to provide even clearer notice to clinicians and make explicit in the statute that conversion therapy in particular is a fraudulent business practice that misleads consumers and exposes LGBTQ people to damaging psychological abuse.

LGBTQ identity cannot and does not need to be changed. In fact, all of the nation’s leading professional medical and mental health associations have rejected conversion therapy as unnecessary, ineffective, and dangerous. To cite some examples, the American Psychiatric Association, American Psychological Association, the American Counseling Association, the

National Association of Social Workers, and the American Medical Association all oppose these practices because they are not evidence-based and can seriously harm patients' mental health.

The American Psychological Association convened the Task Force on Appropriate Therapeutic Responses to Sexual Orientation, which conducted a systematic review of peer-reviewed journal literature on sexual orientation change efforts and issued a report in 2009. The task force concluded that sexual orientation change efforts can pose critical health risks to LGBTQ people, including depression, suicidality, substance abuse, high-risk sexual behaviors, loss of friends and potential romantic partners, social withdrawal, a feeling of being dehumanized, and a loss of faith, to name a few.

In 2012, SB 1172 by Senator Ted Lieu was signed into law to prohibit licensed mental health providers from performing sexual orientation change efforts with a patient under 18 years of age. Violating this law subjects the provider to discipline by their licensing entity. To date, eight other states and the District of Columbia have similar laws in place, demonstrating a growing national consensus that these practices are dangerous and damaging.

This bill will put clinicians on express notice that conversion therapy violates California's consumer protection laws. So-called "conversion therapy" misleads consumers and exposes LGBTQ people to psychological abuse that can cause lifelong damage. The consumer protections in this bill are needed to codify existing California case law and prevent these abusive practices from continuing to harm LGBTQ Californians of all ages.

For these reasons, we support AB 2943 and urge you to support this critical legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Amanda Wallner". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Amanda Wallner

Director, California LGBT Health and Human Services Network