



January 2, 2020

Senate President Mitch Carmichael
Speaker of the House Roger Hanshaw
Members of the West Virginia State Legislature
West Virginia State Capitol Complex
Charleston, WV 25305

Dear West Virginia Legislators,

As President of the West Virginia Psychological Association, and on behalf of our Executive Board and Membership, I am writing in support of the 2020 *Youth Mental Health Protection Act*. The purpose of this bill is to protect children and adolescents from harmful, potentially deadly, and frankly fraudulent pseudo-therapeutic practices, specifically sexual orientation “conversion therapy.” As psychologists, we pledge to provide evidence-based and ethically sound clinical treatment. We are pleased to once again partner with Fairness WV in support of this important piece of legislation that will protect some of West Virginia’s most vulnerable citizens. This bill marks a critical step forward for youth in our state who may otherwise be harmed by this dangerous practice.

The *Youth Mental Health Protection Act* would prohibit mental health providers from engaging in, or referring a patient under the age of 18, to conversion therapy. The reasons for our support are as follows: 1) Sexual orientation is not a mental disorder, so we cannot and should not attempt to “treat” people for it, and 2) It is particularly harmful for children and adolescents’ psychological development and well-being to undergo a practice that is designed to convert them to a different sexual orientation. These reasons are consistent with American Psychological Association (APA) resolutions dating back to 1997, which have been reaffirmed by subsequent APA Task Force investigations. In 2015, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) joined APA in calling for the end of conversion therapy for LGBT youth. Every major mental health group has recognized conversion therapy as baseless, lacking in scientific evidence, and dangerous to the public. This bill would recognize this fact and protect WV minors from those who would attempt to engage in “sexual orientation change efforts.”

For additional information, you may contact me or our Executive Director at info@wvpsychology.org.

Warm regards,

Jennifer Mills Price, Psy.D.
President, WV Psychological Association