



West Virginia Psychiatric Association
A District Branch of the American Psychiatric Association

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President

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Senate President Mitch Carmichael
Speaker of the House Tim Armstead
Members of the West Virginia State Legislature
West Virginia State Capitol Complex
Charleston, West Virginia 25305

Dear Legislators of West Virginia:

The West Virginia Psychiatric Association, the medical society of more than 180 psychiatrists practicing in the state, would like to express strong support for the **Youth Mental Health Protection Act, HB2817**. This important legislation will protect West Virginia's youth from harmful and potentially deadly psychotherapy practices aimed at changing sexual orientation in minors.

Since 1973, the APA has held the position that homosexuality is not a diagnosable mental disorder and therefore does not require treatment or therapy. Conversion therapy has not been shown to have any scientific basis whatsoever. It also has the opposite effect, making youth feel stigmatized and causing them emotional harm.

The American Psychiatric Association published its 1998 position statement that "APA opposes any psychiatric treatment, such as "reparative" or "conversion" therapy, that is based on the assumption that homosexuality per se is a mental disorder or is based on the a priori assumption that the patient should change his or her homosexual orientation."

In 2013, the APA expanded on the position, stating "The American Psychiatric Association does not believe that same-sex orientation should or needs to be changed, and efforts to do so represent a significant risk of harm by subjecting individuals to forms of treatment which have not been scientifically validated and by undermining self-esteem when sexual orientation fails to change. No credible evidence exists that any mental health intervention can reliably and safely change sexual orientation; nor, from a mental health perspective does sexual orientation need to be changed."

Please support the **Youth Mental Health Protection Act, HB2817** for West Virginia's children. If you need further information, please contact me at tsparks@hsc.wvu.edu

Regards,

Tiffany Sparks, MD

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