



Oppose H.R. 5469, "Pursuing Equity in Mental Health Act" -- Unlawful, Dangerous, and Unnecessary

Testimony of Dr. Andre Van Mol, MD

1. ***Everyone should be free to find therapy and support to help them achieve their desired goals and outcomes, including those who want to explore all options regarding feelings of same-sex attraction and gender incongruence/anxiety.*** Voices-of-change.org, ChangedMovement.com, exodusglobalalliance.org/firstpersonc7.php, and SexChangeRegret.com are among several groups providing testimonials of people who have changed undesired sexual attraction or gender incongruence through professional counseling.

2. ***Therapy bans deprive adults and children of the freedom to set their own counseling goals and objectives, and it will likely cause some children and adults to commit suicide by forbidding therapy for underlying issues.*** The American Psychological Association's Handbook on Sexuality and Psychologyⁱ and numerous studies acknowledge that childhood sexual abuse can cause unwanted homosexuality in some individuals.^{ii iii} The overwhelming majority of people with gender dysphoria have additional mental health conditions, neuro-developmental disabilities like autism spectrum disorder, adverse childhood events, and family issues that pre-date or coincide with their gender incongruence.^{iv v vi vii} The *APA Handbook on Sexuality and Psychology* specifically warns against a rush affirm same-sex attraction or gender transition because it risks neglecting underlying psychological issues.^{viii} Endocrine Society guidelines state that psychological intervention is all that is needed in some forms of gender dysphoria.^{ix}

If this bill passes, children and adults will be unable to heal these wounds, be legislated into a false identity, and can be left suicidal and without hope as a result.

3. ***Professional Psychological Associations state that homosexuality is changeable.***

The 2014 APA Handbook states that sexual orientation may change over a person's lifetime especially during adolescence.^x The APA's Dr. Lisa Diamond concluded "...arguments based on the immutability of sexual orientation are unscientific, given what we now know..."^{xi} The UK's Royal College of Psychiatrists declared in 2014: "sexual orientation is determined by a combination of biological and postnatal environmental factors" . . . "[it] is not the case that sexual orientation is immutable or might not vary to some extent in a person's life..." Numerous studies concur.^{xii xiii xiv xv}

4. ***Trans-identification/gender anxiety has an overwhelming probability of desistance, resolving on its own in 75-95% by adulthood.***^{xvi xvii xviii xix xx} The "watchful waiting" model of treatment – with its associated comprehensive mental health evaluation and counseling, including of the family -- is the international standard of care for minors with gender incongruence,/anxiety,^{xxi xxii xxiii} not counseling bans.

5. Twenty states have voted down similar bans because they are needless.

Complaints of harmful practice and clinician malfeasance are addressed by appointed licensed mental health professionals on state licensing board. These licensing boards are responsible for documenting and addressing alleged harm. Where are the verified, documented harms and the penalized change-allowing licensed therapists?

6. There is no evidence of harm from sexual orientation change therapy provided by licensed professionals.^{xxiv xxv xxvi xxvii xxviii xxix} Decades of supportive studies exist.^{xxx xxxi}

^{xxxii xxxiii xxxiv} Change-allowing counseling is patient-initiated, patient-directed talk therapy led by licensed therapists working with willing and motivated people. Most harm claims have not involved trained therapists and generally are unsubstantiated. The popularly misquoted American Psychological Association's Gay and Lesbian Task Force's 2009 report stated specifically that modern change allowing therapy "since 1978" was "nonaversive," meaning free of pain or shame infliction (p.43), and that research meeting scientific standards did not allow attributing harm or inefficacy to change-allowing therapy (pp. 43,82). Simply stated, the APA Task Force report did not prove or state that change-allowing therapy was either harmful or fraudulent.

7. As constitutional law catches up to therapy bans, they are falling. The city of Tampa, Florida lost in court in *Vazzo v Tampa*.^{xxxv} New York City withdrew its therapy ban when challenged.^{xxxvi} HR 5469 would follow. Please vote no.

Most respectfully,
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ⁱ APA *Handbook on Sexuality and Psychology* (American Psychological Association, 2014) Mustanski, Kuper, & Greene, pp. 609-610.

ⁱⁱ Tomeo, M.E., Templer, D. I., Anderson, S., & Kotler, D. (2001). Comparative Data of Childhood and Adolescence Molestation in Heterosexual and Homosexual Persons. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 30(5), 535-541.

ⁱⁱⁱ Walker, M. D., Hernandez, A. M., & Davey, M. (2012). Childhood Sexual Abuse and Adult Sexual Identity Formation: Intersection of Gender, Race, and Sexual Orientation. *Family Therapy*, 40(5), 385-398.

^{iv} J. Michael Bailey and Ray Blanchard, "Suicide or transition: The only options for gender dysphoric kids?" 4thwavenow.com, Sept. 8, 2017.

<https://4thwavenow.com/2017/09/08/suicide-or-transition-the-only-options-for-gender-dysphoric-kids/>

^v Zucker, KJ, et al. Gender Dysphoria in Adults. *Annu. Rev. Clin. Psychol.* 2016. 12:217-47. (P. 227.)

^{vi} Meybodi AM, Hajebi A, Jolfaei AG. The frequency of personality disorders in patients with gender identity disorder. *Med J Islam Repub Iran.* 2014;28:90. Published 2014 Sep 10.

^{vii} Becerra-Culqui TA, Liu Y, Nash R, et al. Mental Health of Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Youth Compared With Their Peers. *Pediatrics.* 2018;141(5):e20173845

^{viii} APA *Handbook on Sexuality and Psychology*, V.1, Bockting, W. Chapter 24: Transgender Identity Development, p. 750.

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- xv Christine E. Kaestle (2019) Sexual Orientation Trajectories Based on Sexual Attractions, Partners, and Identity: A Longitudinal Investigation From Adolescence Through Young Adulthood Using a U.S. Representative Sample, *The Journal of Sex Research*, 56:7, 811-826, DOI: [10.1080/00224499.2019.1577351](https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2019.1577351)
- xvi APA *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual*, 5th edition, "Gender Dysphoria," p. 455.
- xvii APA *Handbook on Sexuality and Psychology* (American Psychological Association, 2014), Bockting, W. Chapter 24: Transgender Identity Development, vol. 1, p. 744.
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- xx Kaltiala-Heino et al. Two years of gender identity service for minors: overrepresentation of natal girls with severe problems in adolescent development. *Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Mental Health* (2015) 9:9.
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- xxxvi Marisa Lati, "Why the N.Y. City Council made the 'painful' decision to repeal its ban on conversion therapy," washingtonpost.com, Sep. 13. 2019.