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Monday, December 16, 2013

The Honorable Mary M. Cheh
Council of the District of Columbia
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Suite 108
Washington, D.C. 20004

Dear Councilmember Cheh:

We endorse Bill 20-0501, the "Conversion Therapy for Minors Prohibition Amendment Act of 2013." Thank you for introducing it, and thanks to your eleven co-sponsors.

Bill 20-0501 will protect LGBT youth from District-licensed therapists who make false claims that being gay or transgender is a mental illness. The American Medical Association and American Psychological Association have denounced conversion efforts. Similar laws have been passed in California and New Jersey, and federal courts upheld them this year.

Anti-gay animus is often dressed up as science. But science is subject to re-examination. The American Psychiatric Association revised its Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders to declassify homosexuality as a disorder in 1973, and transgender identity in 2012. The real problem faced by sexual minority youth is intolerance.

Abbe Land of The Trevor Project wrote in August that these "dangerous and discredited sexual orientation change efforts ... do not work to change an individual's sexual orientation or gender identity, neither are they condoned by any major medical organization. In fact, studies show that LGBTQ youth who are subjected to or coerced into these harmful practices are more likely to face a range of negative outcomes including depression, substance abuse and suicidality."

Therapists who market conversion therapy services (including treatments by phone) to parents in the D.C. area include Richard Cohen and Christopher Doyle, both well-known proponents of these practices. So this problem is close to home. It is essential that the District protect its children by legislating against this dangerous and abusive quackery. By taking action, the District will also add its voice to those around the world protesting these fraudulent practices.

Sincerely,

Richard J. Rosendall
President