

Gay and Lesbian Activists Alliance of Washington, DC

P.O. Box 75265

Washington, D.C. 20013

www.glaa.org

www.glaaforum.org (blog)

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Contact: Rick Rosendall

(202) 328-6278

GLAA and Allies Confront Defenders of Junk Medicine

The Gay and Lesbian Activists Alliance of Washington, D.C. (GLAA) and its allies will confront defenders of anti-gay junk medicine today at a noon hearing on Bill 20-501, the Conversion Therapy for Minors Prohibition Amendment Act of 2013, before the D.C. Council Committee on Health, chaired by Councilmember Yvette M. Alexander. GLAA Secretary Saul Cruz, first on the witness list, will testify in support of the bill.

Also testifying in support are representatives from the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Southern Poverty Law Center, the Human Rights Campaign, the Wanda Alston Foundation, Supporting and Mentoring Youth Advocates and Leaders (SMYAL), and the DC Center for the LGBT Community. Also testifying for the bill will be Catherine Tuerk, former president of Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG), and a number of affirming clergy including Rev. Graylan S. Hagler of Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ and Bishop Rainey Cheeks of Inner Light Ministries.

Witnesses opposing the bill include notorious conversion therapist Christopher Doyle of the International Healing Foundation, Peter Sprigg of the Family Research Council, and Greg Quinlan of Parents and Friends of Ex-Gays and Gays (PFOX).

GLAA's Cruz testifies: "Bill 20-501 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 so-called conversion efforts.

"Anti-gay animus is often dressed up as science. In fact, 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.

"This so-called therapy uses rejection, shame, and psychological abuse to pressure young people to try to change who they are. It is disingenuous for our opponents to claim that their young patients seek this treatment, considering the lack of understanding and affirmation the minors in question face."

Cruz continues: "We must protect our youth from junk medicine. You will hear today from peddlers of it. Let us be clear: we do not seek to restrict freedom of speech or religion. We seek to regulate licensed therapy.... The science regarding conversion therapy is a settled question. Our opponents lost.

"Health care should not be based on misinformation. This bill will send clear guidance that conversion therapy is harmful and not an acceptable practice among District-licensed providers.

"We stand for the right of all our youth to make the most of who they are, and not be subjected to mistreatment disguised as health care."

GLAA's full testimony and supporting references can be found online at:
<http://glaa.org/archive/2014/convotherapy0627.pdf>

Bill 20-501 was introduced by Councilmember Mary Cheh, and co-sponsored by eleven of her colleagues.

Founded in 1971, the Gay and Lesbian Activists Alliance of Washington (GLAA) is an all-volunteer, non-partisan, non-profit political organization that defends the civil rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in the Nation's Capital. GLAA lobbies the D.C. Council, monitors government agencies, educates and rates local candidates, and works in coalitions to defend the safety, health, and equal rights of LGBT families. GLAA remains the nation's oldest continuously active gay and lesbian civil rights organization.

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