

Testimony in support of House Bill 2307

By Gregg Moreland, vice chair, LGBT Caucus of the Democratic Party of Oregon

Chair Gelsler, Committee members, thank you for taking the time to hear about this important bill.

As vice chair of the LGBT Caucus, as well a member of the HRC Portland Steering Committee, I continually work towards making Oregon a better place for the next generation of LGBT people, to reduce stigma and shame, especially for our youth. Proponents of conversion therapy thrive on that stigma. However, telling a child who is questioning their sexual orientation or identity that they are broken and need to be fixed leads to a lifetime of recovery from the harm. And for some, it leads to more extreme ends.

For me, however, this is also very personal.

From a very young age, growing up here in Oregon, I knew I was different. I knew I thought differently, saw things in a different way, and felt things differently from everyone else. I also realized that I was more attracted to guys than girls. In my child's mind, I put these things together and thought that all my differences were due to being gay, and I so much wanted to be like everyone else. When I was in middle school I began hearing about the programs and counselors who vowed they could make someone like me straight. I researched programs through Exodus and read books by licensed psychologists that offered that promise to fix me.

It wasn't until a few years out of college that I finally connected with a conversion therapy group in Dallas, Texas, where my job had located me. I actively tried to make it work for me, but after countless sessions of heart-wrenching effort over one year I decided that it was not going to happen. I was a failure.

For the next several years, I dove into my career, pretty much completely neglecting anything else in my life. Any attempts at relationships failed. I could not fully live since I still had so many things that were unresolved. I had done nothing to fix myself.

It wasn't until more than 15 years later, when I turned 40 years old, that I connected with a new group of ex-gay survivors at beyondexgay.com. BEYOND EX-GAY is a group devoted to affirming people as they really are and supporting individuals who have been scarred by "conversion" efforts. I drove down to their first conference in Irvine, California, not knowing what to expect. I enjoyed the conference, but didn't feel moved by any of it. It wasn't until my drive back to Oregon when I was flooded with emotions of what had happened, and where I was with my life and how I had shut off a large part of who I was. So, in 2006, I slowly started living.

Since that time, I have been further finding out really who I am and finally, as recently as last year, discovered that the many differences I was trying to fix all those years ago are much more due to living with Asperger's Syndrome, on the Autism Spectrum.

When California passed this ban in 2012, the LGBT caucus of the Democratic Party of Oregon passed a resolution to do the same in Oregon. The full DPO State Central Committee followed with a vote in support of the resolution. We have been working with our coalition partners ever since. This is not just important to me, but also important to our LGBT youth.

I ask for your vote in support of House Bill 2307.