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MEMORANDUM (via e-mail)

To: Mayor Steven B. Grant
Vice Mayor Mack McCray
Commissioner Justin Katz
Commissioner Christina Romelus
Commissioner Joe Casello

From: W. Trent Steele, Board Member
Judge Rand Hoch (retired), President and Founder

Re: Prohibiting conversion therapy counseling, practices, and treatments by state licensed professionals in the City of Boynton Beach

Date: December 8, 2016

“Conversion therapy” (also known as “reparative therapy,”) is counseling based on the erroneous assumption gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (LGBTQ) identities are mental disorders that can be cured through aversion treatment. These discredited practices have long been rejected by our nation’s leading medical and mental health organizations.

In 2001, David Satcher, U.S. Surgeon General during the administration of President George W. Bush, issued a report finding that "there is no valid scientific evidence that sexual orientation can be changed." Years later, California Governor Jerry Brown stated that “[t]hese practices have no basis in science or medicine and they will now be relegated to the dustbin of quackery."

Just last year, the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration concluded that “[d]irecting the child or adolescent to conform to any particular gender expression or identity, or directing parents and guardians to place pressure on the child or adolescent to conform to specific gender expressions and/or identities, is inappropriate and reinforces harmful gender stereotypes.” (The report, which called for the end of conversion therapy, can be found online at: <http://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content//SMA15-4928/SMA15-4928.pdf>).

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The Palm Beach County Human Rights Council (“PBCHRC”) recognizes that the practice of conversion therapy, which is most often forced upon minors by their parents or guardians, is extremely harmful. The “treatment” frequently provokes guilt and anxiety. Moreover, it is not uncommon for the therapy to result in depression, self-destructive behavior and suicide.

PBCHRC believes that licensed professionals engaged in conversion therapy are harming LGBTQ youth and therefore the City of Boynton Beach should enact an ordinance banning the practice.

To date, California, Illinois, New Jersey, Oregon, Vermont, the District of Columbia, Cincinnati, Miami Beach, Seattle, Wilton Manors, Bay Harbor Islands, and, most recently, West Palm Beach, have enacted laws to prevent licensed mental health providers from offering conversion therapy to minors. **In each of these jurisdictions, the ban applies only to state-licensed therapists. Unlicensed ones, such as those associated with faith-based groups, retain their religious freedom to engage in such work. Additionally, adults remain free to seek out such therapy.**

Over the years, there have been several legal challenges to the constitutionality of these laws. However, *on three occasions*, the U.S. Supreme Court has declined to hear challenges to the constitutionality laws banning conversion therapy for minors.

As noted above, nearly every major medical and psychological association in the country has come out in opposition to conversion therapy. These include, but are not limited to, .

American Academy of Child Adolescent Psychiatry
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Association of School Administrators
American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy
American College of Physicians
American Counseling Association
American Federation of Teachers
American Medical Association
American Psychiatric Association
American Psychoanalytic Association
American Psychoanalytic Association
American School Counselor Association
American School Health Association
National Association of Social Workers
National Association of School Psychologists
National Association of Secondary School Principals
National Education Association
Pan American Health Organization: Regional Office of the World Health Organization
School Social Work Association of America
World Psychiatric Association

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On November 7, 2016, the City of West Palm Beach became the first municipality in Palm Beach County to enact an ordinance banning conversion therapy for minors. I have attached a copy of the ordinance, along with the agenda introduction.

The Palm Beach County Human Rights Council hopes that you will promptly take steps to ensure that the quackery known as conversion therapy is prohibited in the City of Boynton Beach.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me directly.

attachments

copies (w/attachments) via e-mail to: PBCHRC Board of Directors
City Manager Lori LaVerriere
City Attorney James A. Cherof