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**Comments/Questions**

Dear Mayor Hanna,

I am writing to express some of my concerns regarding the current wording of the Youth Mental Health Protection Resolution #15-R-19. My main concern is that it is overly broad and lacks clarity. On the one hand the resolution says that “The practice of conversion therapy...is \*often\* conducted in a violent and damaging manner” but then it goes on to ban \*all\* conversion therapy. It seems to me that it should just ban actually abusive practices.

Additionally, I find it problematic that this resolution covers conversion therapy for both homosexuality and transgenderism. The resolution appeals to science, but, while we have many decades of research into homosexuality, transgenderism is not as well understood or studied. At this point, there is research that indicates that, although some people may genuinely be transgender, many of the children who identify as transgender will, if left alone, grow up to be cis-gendered homosexuals. There is also concern that certain vulnerable girls may be susceptible to something that masquerades as transgenderism—that is to say that, as young children they display none of the tendencies typically associated with transgender people but when they get older they suddenly start identifying as transgender, possibly due to a combination of socialization and underlying, non-gender-identity related emotional or mental health concerns, and the transgenderism goes away given time and appropriate therapy.

As I read the proposed language of this resolution, it seems to me that neither children who think they are transgender but are really just homosexual nor straight children who go through a period of believing they are transgender will be served well by it.

I understand that the resolution goes on to say that conversion therapy “does not include counseling that provides assistance to a person undergoing gender transition, or counseling that provides acceptance, support, and understanding of a person or facilitates a person’s coping, social support, and identity exploration and development, including sexual-orientation-neutral interventions to prevent or address unlawful conduct or unsafe sexual practices, as long as such counseling does not seek to change an individual’s sexual orientation or gender identity” but even that carve out means that even basic, non-abusive talk therapy cannot seek to change an individual’s sexual orientation or gender identity which seems like it could easily be used to block even competent and legitimate therapists from providing appropriate care to their clients.

Additionally, I think it would be a good idea that in the section of the resolution that describes how conversion therapy shall not be defined, that you include a sentence that states that therapy which is not conversion therapy can be sought at the behest of a parent or legal guardian—that a child’s disinterest or dislike of any given therapy will not play a role in determining whether or not it is conversion therapy. I think this is an important addition because you can find multiple anecdotal stories of children who were absolutely convinced they were transgender but their parents were less convinced so had them go to therapy after which the child realized they really weren’t really transgender. You can also find multiple homosexuals saying, “Thank God transgenderism wasn’t a thing when I was a kid because I would have absolutely latched onto it and grown up to be a much less whole and contented adult.”

I asked Alderperson Metzler specifically to tell me how this resolution would effect children who are not transgender but go through a period of thinking they are transgender, and he has yet to respond to me. This suggests to me that this very real issue has not been considered during the drafting of this resolution.

Additionally, it concerns me that Alderperson Metzler clearly stated to me that he was not aware of anyone within Appleton even practicing conversion therapy. When I asked him about conversion therapists in the wider Fox Cities area and what specifically their therapy activities/practices look like, he did not reply.

So, there are no conversion therapists in Appleton, the Alderperson who is the driving force behind this resolution can't or won't describe what exactly conversion therapists in the greater Fox Cities area are doing, and the resolution as written could potentially cause difficulties in getting appropriate therapy for cis-gendered children (both homosexual and straight) who go through a period of thinking they are transgender, all of which leaves me seriously questioning the wisdom or necessity of passing this.

I applaud and support the goal of ending genuinely abusive practices, but this resolution seems overly broad and deeply flawed to the point that I believe it could harm some of the children it is intended to help.

While I understand the desire to make a bold statement, the community would be better served by a more nuanced and less sweeping resolution.

Thanks,

Jessica Anderson