



TO: Senate Health & Welfare Committee
FROM: Allen Gilbert, executive director, ACLU-VT
DATE: Feb. 5, 2016
SUBJECT: S. 132, conversion therapy on minors prohibition

The ACLU supports S. 132. “Therapies” to change a person’s sexual orientation – known as “conversion” or “reparative” therapy, or “SOCE” (sexual orientation change efforts) – are based on the long-discredited notion that being gay, lesbian, or bisexual is a mental disorder in need of a “cure.”

Historically, these therapies have perpetuated and legitimized state-sanctioned discrimination against gay men, lesbians, and bi-sexuals. There is now widespread consensus in the mental health profession that “therapy” to change a person’s sexual orientation is not efficacious, poses a risk of serious harm, and is unethical.

S. 132 protects young consumers of mental health care and avoids state sanction of harmful and discriminatory professional practices. The prohibition is consistent with medical practice norms. It does not violate individuals’ medical autonomy interests because the state’s interest in prohibiting the practice outweighs any medical autonomy interests.

We hope the committee acts favorably on S.132.