



Testimony before the Joint Standing Committee on Labor, Commerce, Research and Economic Development
An Act to Clarify the Scope of Practice of Certain Licensed Professionals Regarding Conversion Therapy
February 21, 2018

Senator Volk, Representative Fecteau and Members of the Committee:

I am Jane Field, Executive Director of the Maine Council of Churches and I write on behalf of seven of our eight member-denominations*, who represent 414 local congregations across the state, to urge you to support LD 912.

The unanimous vote of the Methodist, Congregational, Episcopal, Lutheran, Unitarian Universalist, Quaker, and Presbyterian representatives to the Council to support passage of LD 912 was based on a set of shared beliefs:

- Our LGBTQ brothers and sisters are beloved children of God, created in the divine image; among us on the Council's Board of Directors are three members of the LGBTQ community and several parents of LGBTQ sons and daughters; in the pulpits and pews of our 414 congregations are cherished colleagues and parishioners who are LGBTQ
- Sexual orientation and gender identity are a gift from God—not a condition that needs treatment, not a choice that needs conversion, not something broken that needs repair, not a sin that needs forgiveness
- Some of the most vulnerable in God's creation are LGBTQ children and youth
- Consigning children and teens to therapy intended to "convert" them from the way in which God created them causes shame and lowered self-esteem, significantly increasing the risk of depression, drug use, anxiety, homelessness and suicide
- Subjecting a child to conversion therapy is not a matter of the parents' religious liberty; it is a matter of religious abuse and it is a violation of the child's religious liberty
- Conversion therapy is psychological and spiritual malpractice and amounts to torture.

Our representatives' decision was also informed by careful research that indicated conversion therapy has been completely discredited by every major medical and psychological organization in the United States, including the American Medical Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, the American Psychiatric Association, the American Psychological Association, the National Association of Social Workers, and the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapists.

For these reasons, the representatives of the seven denominations listed above urge you to support passage of LD 912.

Thank you for your consideration.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jane Field".

* The remaining member denomination, the Roman Catholic Diocese of Portland, opposes passage of LD 912 and has already submitted their testimony to your committee.