



Roman Catholic Diocese of Portland

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Comments of Suzanne Lafreniere, on behalf of the Roman Catholic Diocese

Written testimony in opposition to LD 912

An Act To Clarify the Scope of Practice of Certain Licensed Professionals Regarding Conversion Therapy

Senator Volk, Representative Fecteau, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor, Commerce, Research and Development, my name is Suzanne Lafreniere and I represent the Roman Catholic Diocese of Portland in opposition to LD 912. The Diocese has a population of over 279,000 Catholics* or one-fifth of the total population of the state of Maine. In addition to its 141 churches organized into 55 parishes, it has 10 elementary schools, one private elementary school, one diocesan high school and one private high school. It also includes one Catholic college, Saint Joseph's College of Maine in Standish.

Simply put this bill limits choice. Limiting the availability of therapies which could benefit children is not in the best interest of the children of Maine. If this bill becomes law, professionals with expertise in counseling would be limited in the help they could give to children who may be operating out of a confusion rather than a conviction about sexual identity.

It is important to note that the Diocese of Portland would never advocate for any type of therapy which is aversive or coercive including but not limited to physical torture, seclusion and isolation methods.

A clarifying question for this committee to consider is whether or not it is advisable as policy for a legislative committee to develop a proscribed list of topics that are prohibited in the course of any and all forms of counseling? And if so, how and who would be authorized to prove that that topic has been discussed? Would such a ban be in the best interest of the children of Maine? If any of those questions have even the slightest negative response or confusion, this bill should be opposed.

Please vote Ought to Not Pass on LD 912. Thank you for your time and consideration today.

*www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/state/maine/