



August 17, 2020

Sen. John Schickel, Co-Chair  
Rep. Adam Koenig, Co-Chair  
Interim Joint Committee on Licensing, Occupations and  
Administrative Regulations  
Kentucky General Assembly

Dear Co-Chairs Schickel and Koenig, and all Committee Members,

The Foundation for a Healthy Kentucky joins a long list of major medical and mental health organizations in supporting legislation to protect LGBTQ youth from the discredited and harmful practice known as “conversion therapy” or “reparative therapy.” These sexual orientation or gender identity conversion efforts (SOGICE) can be cruel and degrading to youth and typically use shaming techniques that enhance anti-LGBTQ stigmas. As of May 2020, at least 700 US cities and counties, 20 states, and the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico have taken action to protect youth from these practices, according to the [Movement Advancement Project](#).

The Foundation looks to medical and mental health experts and the science to understand whether therapies are effective, and whether they might do more harm than good. Conversion therapy has been condemned as ineffective and dangerous by every major medical and mental health organization in America as well as several international health organizations. A study published in the American Journal of Public Health in July 2020 concluded that “those who reported undergoing SOGICE were more than twice as likely to report having attempted suicide and having multiple suicide attempts.” Other studies have cited increased risk of depression, illegal drug use, HIV and sexually transmitted diseases among youth who undergo such discredited practices.

Reducing health disparities is core to the Foundation for a Healthy Kentucky’s work. The July 2020 AJPH study also found that youth who are Hispanic/Latinx, who live in the Southern U.S., whose families are lower-income or whose religion is anti-LGBTQ are more likely to be subjected to conversion therapy. These youth are, therefore, at greater risk for suicide and other negative health impacts.

We encourage the legislature to pass the bipartisan bill pre-filed by Sen. Alice Forgy Kerr and Rep. Lisa Willner during the 2021 General Assembly to protect Kentucky’s youth from the unethical practice of conversion therapy by prohibiting its use by licensed medical and mental health professionals.

Toward a healthier Kentucky,

Ben Chandler  
President and CEO