

ST. JOSEPH
CATHOLIC CHURCH

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August 3, 2020

Dear Members of the Interim Joint Committee on Licensing and Occupations:

My Catholic faith calls me to speak out in opposition to "conversion therapy." The Catholic Church believes that human life is sacred. Far too many young lives have been placed at grave risk because of this dangerous and discredited practice.

On October 1, 1997, the U.S. Bishop's Committee on Marriage and Family issued "Always Our Children: A Pastoral Message to Parents of Homosexual Children and Suggestions for Pastoral Ministers." The purpose of this pastoral message was to reach parents trying to cope with the discovery of homosexuality in their adolescent or adult child. It urged families to draw upon reservoirs of faith, hope, and love as they face uncharted futures.

Following Catholic teachings from the Catechism of the Catholic Church, the teachings of Pope St. John Paul II, and the statements of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, this message offered parents and ministers a fresh look at the grace present in family life and the unfailing mercy of Christ our Lord.

"Always Our Children" speaks today of accepting yourself, your beliefs, values, questions, and all of your struggles, while accepting and loving your children as a gift of God; and accepting the full truth of God's revelation about the dignity of the human person and the meaning of human sexuality.

Within the Catholic moral vision there is no contradiction among these levels of acceptance, for truth and love are not opposed. They are inseparably joined and rooted in one person, Jesus Christ, who reveals God to be ultimate truth and saving love.

Today, I would like to address you about those instances where it may be appropriate and necessary for our children to receive professional help, including counseling and spiritual direction, which is protected by our freedom of religion. It is important, of course, that he or she receive such guidance willingly, without imposition.

In "Conversion Therapy" or "Reparative Therapy," practitioners use of a variety of shameful, emotional, traumatic or physically painful stimuli which violate the inherent dignity of the person exposed to these practices. Imposing "Conversion Therapy" on a young person still struggling to understand their own feelings and identity can do irreparable psychological and spiritual harm, and have too often been associated with suicide attempts and suicide completion. These harmful practices focus on sexual orientation, but not on the spiritual needs or personal struggles of the person.

Always With Open Hearts

Aside from the grave risks imposed by these harmful practices, contemporary science and medicine assert that these sexual orientation change efforts are ineffective.

This pseudoscientific methodology has been rejected by the American Academy of Child Adolescent Psychiatry, American Academy of Pediatrics, American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy, American College of Physicians, American Counseling Association, American Medical Association, American Psychiatric Association, American Psychoanalytic Association, American Psychological Association, American School Counselor Association, American School Health Association, National Association of Social Workers, Pan American Health Organization, and the World Psychiatric Organization, and 20 states in the nation. Their conclusions are almost the same: it is unethical, it does not work, and it is harmful to its clients.

The meaning and implications of the term homosexual are not universally agreed upon. Church teaching acknowledges a distinction between a homosexual "tendency," which proves to be "transitory," and "homosexuals who are definitively such because of some kind of innate instinct" (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Declaration on Certain Questions Concerning Sexual Ethics*, 1975, no. 8).

We may not agree on the term of Homosexuality, but we must agree that shameful pseudoscientific methodologies that are harmful to the dignity of a person should be banned in our state.

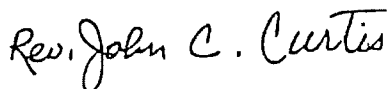
Paz,



Fr. David G. Sánchez
Pastor
St. Joseph Catholic Church

Fr. Richard Watson, Pastor
Historic Saint Paul Catholic Church

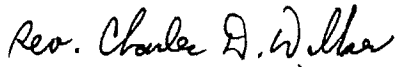
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