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ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

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Sponsor Statement
House Bill 8

Prohibition of Conversion Therapy on Youth and Vulnerable Adults

HB 8 would prohibit physicians, physicians' assistants, psychiatrists, psychologists, psychological associates, and other "practitioners of the healing arts" licensed by the state from treating a person under the age of 18, as well as vulnerable adults, with a therapy or regimen that seeks to change their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Research has shown that sexual orientation and gender identity change efforts, commonly known as "conversion therapies," can pose critical health risks to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) persons, particularly youths.

A 2018 study by The Family Acceptance Project, under the auspices of San Francisco State University, found that rates of attempted suicide by LGBT youth whose parents tried to change their sexual orientation were more than double the rate of youth who were not subject to conversion efforts. For LGBT young people who were subject to conversion attempts both in-home and out-of-home, the suicide-attempt rate nearly tripled.

The American Psychological Association, the American Psychoanalytic Association, the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, and the American College of Physicians have all voiced opposition to conversion therapies for young people, noting not only the lack of evidence that such therapies are "successful," but also citing evidence that they carry significant risks of serious harm.

HB 8 regulates only therapeutic treatment by licensed health practitioners performing work within the confines of a counselor-client relationship. Nothing in the legislation affects any individual's expressive speech, tenets, or practices outside of that context.

I would be grateful for your support for HB 8.