



GirlGov Chester County LGBTQ+ Testimonials in Support of HB 729

“Conversion therapy should be banned because it’s just a horrendous act that forces a human being to be something they are not. Society should accept EVERYONE no matter what sexual orientation or gender you are.”

“Dear Members of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives, (& the GirlGov Committee) I am Brooklyn Tufts-Simon, a transgender female writing to help push the elephant that is change for equality, & change for ethical conduct in society of all forms. Namely, conversion therapy. Having a trained psychologist &/or therapist force a child to conform to unjust gender & sexuality social bindings is wrong. As wrong as abusing someone or lynching someone based off the color of their skin. You are, in essence, attacking everything they knew of themselves, deconstructing the fundamentals of who they are, & attempting to build an unwanted monument to unjust social standards that are not standard in most of society anymore. These programs that some minors are being put through involuntarily is harming their self-esteem, making them feel like they need to be fixed, like there is something wrong with them, & traumatizing their younger, underdeveloped brains. & people wonder why depression & anxiety are so common among children these days, even more so those of the LGBTQ+ community. There are many groups & even a few laws concerning trauma & the minors affected thereof, yet the trauma being dealt to some children are passing by scot-free by most of these very same groups. Their goal is to prevent trauma, yet they are missing this key area, that is, conversion therapy. By passing this bill, you can help hundreds, maybe even thousands, of younger Pennsylvanians, both those born & unborn, from being mentally scarred so radically. This bill can make those children become healthier & more stable grown adults in the coming decades. Some of the growing generation may have serious problems due to these traumatic events, & could be more prone to acts that are outside our common sense, but is sensible to them. We could be preventing hundreds of suicides, homicides, shootings, & hundreds more trauma cases because of the decline in violence. Thanks you for your patience, thank you for listening. I hope that this message does anything, & that it helps at all. Thanks again, & may your next Philly cheesesteak be extra cheesy. Thanks, Brooklyn”

“Conversion therapy is an outdated and homophobic practice. Conversion therapy can harm children and adults mentally and physically. Conversion therapy doesn't "fix" people because being part of the lgbtqia+ community isn't a disease that needs to be cured. As a young member of the lgbtqia+ community coming out is already a very scary concept but to not only be afraid for the reactions of loved ones but a potentially dangerous situation. Parents/Guardians having the option to send their child to conversion therapy should be illegal. Children should be free to love who they love without feeling shameful and wrong.”

“Hello my name is Kate I am a member of the LGBTQ+ community. When I first came out to my friends, they were very accepting, but some of them would make jokes about my sexuality and how I dressed “so gay”. I was at a birthday party in October and we were introducing ourselves in a game of ice breakers. Before I could even say my name, one of my best friends interrupted and said “Kate’s gay”. In front of 25 people I didn’t know. I was taken by surprise but I think I handled it well. I corrected her and said I was bi and proceeded to say some fun facts about me. I realize now how badly this situation could



have been if there were people at that party who were homophobic or unaccepting of those in the community. I am lucky that after it happened I received comfort privately from the people who truly cared and felt bad about the situation. Since then, I have healed and I am now more accepting of myself than ever. The friend who outed me ended up leaving my life, and now I am able to express myself freely to the people I love. I couldn't imagine living my life not expressing the way I feel and the person I am. Conversion therapy takes away the freedom of those in the LGBTQ+ community. It suppresses us and tries to change us to be something we are not. The United States of America is 'the land of the free', so why are we taking away the rights of those who just wish to be free and express themselves?"

"Conversion therapy seriously damages the person mental health. Society needs to move on from the idea that being part of the LGBTQ+ community is a disorder that needs to be fixed."

"I believe that even though I am not a part of the LGBTQ+ community, I fully support and stand behind everybody a part of the community 1000%."

"I feel as if conversation therapy is harmful treatment and that it falsely claims to change a person's gender identity. This does not affect me or my family personally but it does show that it affect many in the state of Pennsylvania and the world."

Conversion therapy is based on the premise that being LGBTQ is a disease or a health condition that needs correction. When in fact it is just a gender identity. No one should get to police how you define yourself or who you chose to love. It's like telling someone to paint a vibrant picture with black or white colors only. While some may find comfort in black or white, they can't deny the existence of other colors and peoples pure love for those colors. Let everyone chose how they wish to paint the canvas of their lives."

"Abandon conversion therapy, invest in inclusion therapy!"

"Conversion therapy is a practice that should not be debated upon whether or not it should be allowed. It fosters hateful beliefs that existing as you are is unacceptable and must be changed. Although this specific practice does not affect me personally, I am willing to stand up for those that have suffered and take action to prevent these reoccurring traumas. In order to create a better society, we all have to put in the work to create positive and long-lasting change."

"Sexual orientation is a biological and genetic phenomenon. It is not a conscious choice. Conversion therapy is harmful for an LGBTQ+ individual as it can lead to depression and anxiety. Moreover, such therapies deny the people basic empathy and dignity. People must be allowed to live a life of dignity and rights without being constantly told that they are "wrong" or their existence is "against the natural order". To move forward from homophobic practices, the society needs to be sensitized towards the problems faced by the LGBTQ+ community and how denying them basic rights is not just an affront to their dignity, it is an impediment to the progress of society as a whole. Support for legislations like House Bill 729 must be mobilized at the grassroots. Education about sexual orientation and gender identity must be included in school curriculum. And lastly, greater representation in power structures and films and stories will go a long way to counter the prejudices and stereotypes our heteronormative society associates with the LGBTQ+ community."



“Hello, I am Julius and I am a sophomore at Conestoga high school. Conversion should be banned because being part of the LGBTQ community is not choice. You cannot change or control the fact that you are gay or bi or whatever you identify as. This is an abusive practice because this is forcing someone to believe something they do not. This is also a violation of the freedom of liberty. Liberty as in freedom as in being a human being and being able to love who you love. I have not yet, luckily, heard of someone who was affected by this. But I know that there are people out there struggling and it’s not fair to these people for being gay. On another note, conversion therapy is mental abuse because conversion is putting stress on you to change all of your beliefs. And since Homosexual/Pansexual/other marriages have been legalized in PA since May 20th, 2014, there is absolutely no reason for anyone to be converted. It’s a perfectly normal thing. Thank you :)”

“My name is Nithya, I’m a sophomore at great Valley High School and I feel very strongly that conversion therapy should be banned. Conversion therapy is an abusive practice that has tormented many members of the LGBTQ+ community. It sets the narrative that being a part of this community is a bad thing and something that must change. To not negate this practice and attempt to dissolve it would be an enormous disservice to all our LGBTQ+ friends and family. Societal norms must change and taking down conversion camps would be a major step forward. The LGBTQ+ people of America deserve better than being told they are wrong for being themselves let’s work to provide a safe future for the LGBTQ+ community.”

“I think conversion therapy should be banned because it is an incredibly harmful practice that places many people at risk. I think people should have the freedom to decide their own sexual orientation, gender identity, or expression. Conversion abuse can have a negative impact on the mental/physical health of those who are victim to it which is scary. I think we as a society have long ways to go to be more accepting towards everyone. It starts with learning about different identities and respecting the decisions of others. I think it is very important to pass this bill because minors, who are especially vulnerable to harmful practices, should not undergo something as traumatic as conversion abuse. I think it is important to realize that most kids are still trying to understand who they are and figure out their own identity, so this kind of harmful pressure can be really bad for their health.”

“My name is Emily Brockson (she/her) I’m in 10th grade. While I’m not a part of the LGBTQ+ community myself, I am a proud ally. I feel conversion therapy needs to be put to a stop because it is an awful and often abusive thing. The whole meaning of conversion therapy is disgusting. Telling people of all ages that they are not perfect the way they are and the way they feel because they don’t fall into society’s standard of “normal”. People need to start loving themselves and how is one supposed to when they are sent away to change? I want to do whatever I can no matter how little that is, to help make people feel safe and proud to openly be a part of the LGBTQ+ community.”

“Conversion therapy can be traumatizing to people and completely disregards our constitutional right.”

“I don't have experience with conversion therapy, and I am so grateful for that. But I have dealt, every day, with the type of people who would happily support conversion. I have had slurs shouted at me in hallways and rape threats posted on my locker. There have been times I have not felt safe being my loud, openly queer self. I am genderfluid. Some days I identify femme, some days I'm nonbinary. And that balance, in addition to maintaining my life, is intense enough without being attacked for it.



Honestly, I don't know if it's worse to be catcalled for presenting like a woman, or harassed for looking too queer. But compared to a lot of people, I am safe. I am lucky - my family is supportive, my friends are kind, my household is stable. I have been lucky, but it is not easy being a disabled queer person in any home, town, or life, in a country so terribly divided and so full of hate."

"My name is Jeneaa, I am an ally of the LGBTQ+ community. I think that conversation therapy should be banned because it's not right to shame people for something they can't change and have been born with. We should address and begin to accept the fact that not all people are heterosexual and that's okay."

"We are currently living a world of great chaos, so now is the time to act and provide glimpses of understanding and acceptance in order to stop the crushing waves of societal expectations and emotional turmoil. Now is the time that we do what is best for our children. I chose to be a Pennsylvania educator because I believe that children are our future. Growing up is never easy, but I would argue that it is way more difficult now than when I was a child. Throughout my education, I had teachers who supported me, so I wanted to give back to my community and educate, empower, and encourage America's children. One of the most beautiful things about being an American citizen is the ability to meet and befriend so many different people. People come in all shapes and sizes—the canvas is colorful and quite beautiful. It is important that we stop this need to force individuals into a shape that does not suit them. Remember when you were a child and your thoughts and feelings were not considered or even heard—I dare say, that this would not be difficult to imagine. Our children need to be heard and listened to because they are the ones that can see the beauty and wonder surrounding them. In this statement, I hope to encourage you to stop LGBTQ+ conversion therapy by passing House Bill 729 because we should never force our children into what we think they should be. We should provide them with the skills and tools to explore, discover, invent, create, and fly. In this, we will confirm that we have our students' and our children's backs and want them to discover what speaks to them because this encourages change, creativity, and progress. In a world, where we see children speaking up more than ever, we should not muzzle them or cut down their self-worth in order to meet our needs. There is a reason they are here—they are our future. So, let them discover who they are meant to be. Thank you for reading this, and I hope that you can see how much America's youth means to me and our country and the need to stop conversion therapy, where we force an individual to conform into a shape that does not truly capture who they are or are meant to be. Please pass House Bill 729."

"I only discovered my sexuality recently. After coming out, I was extremely insecure and would oftentimes hide my identity unless I was with my girlfriend. It's taken nearly two years for me to be comfortable in my own skin, but, even now, there's still room to grow. Although I'm more confident, I still have to deal constantly with societal responses, which is tiring and frustrating. I've had to deal with disgusted looks when walking down the street with my girlfriend, hurtful judgements, and homophobic family members. It's amazing how tiring it can be to simply be yourself. After suffering through so much discrimination already, I find it inconceivable that we should have to worry about fighting conversion therapy as well."

"Conversion therapy makes LGBTQ+ youth feel like they are broken, or that something is wrong with them. That is not the case, and they need to know that. Being gay or trans is not a sin or something that needs to be fixed, but rather something that needs to be celebrated, and young LGBTQ+ people may



need help becoming themselves and expressing themselves with the help of their parents, or other adults in their life. I am not openly gay (I am bisexual) to many people, but I know that almost everyone in my family would support me if I came out. That is not the case for many gay and trans youth, because they are scared that they will get kicked out, or put into conversion therapy. Young LGBTQ+ members need and deserve a welcoming community (not just the LGBTQ community, but the entire community) to come out into and feel safe in. West Chester and Pennsylvania as a whole can be one step closer to being that community of conversion therapy for minors is completely banned.”

“Conversion therapy can lead to anxiety, depression, self-image problems, and more. Young people should not have to go through these things. We need to be more open-minded and let people, especially young people, express themselves freely without feeling like they have to change themselves to fit in.”

“I think conversion therapy is an archaic and ignorant practice. It stems out of a lack of acceptance for people that are different and perpetuates the idea that homosexuality/genderfluidity is a "disease". It is not a disease- it is perfectly normal. It pains me to see that society has still not fully accepted the LGBTQ+ community. The fact that conversion therapy still exists is unacceptable- putting children through this abuse and telling them that there is something wrong with them just because of their sexuality leads to permanent trauma and scarring.

“I am bisexual and have decided not to tell my parents because they are very unaccepting of homosexuality. It scares me that if I decide to come out to them, conversion therapy might be an option. I don't want to be subject to that kind of abuse just for expressing who I am. I know that I'm not the only kid in this situation- there are so many people who fear that they will be subjected to this kind of abuse/discrimination if they come out. This is why conversion therapy needs to be banned- it is a form of abuse and ignorance.”

“Conversion therapy should be banned because it involves dangerous, yet vastly unsuccessful, attempts at changing a person's sexual orientation or gender identity. There has been no scientific evidence that suggests that an individual's sexual orientation or gender identity is pathological, just as there has been no evidence that conversion therapy actually works. In fact, unsuccessful attempts at conversion therapy have been known to cause guilt, anxiety and depression, as well as other forms of harm to the people undergoing it.”

“I had a friend come out to me a few months ago. About conversion therapy, he said, "If I believed it worked, I would definitely consider it." It is extremely disheartening to think that people are willing to put themselves through the pain of something as extreme as conversion therapy just to fit in with the expectations of society. While it is promising to see that other states in the US have rules protecting individuals from conversion therapy, it is important that homophobic practices such as conversion therapy are banned in other states as well to prevent further harm, both physical and mental, from coming to members of the LGBTQ+ community.”

“My name is Leah, I am 15 years old and member of the LGBTQ+ community. As a society it's time that we move beyond blatant hate, start respecting each other's identity, and recognize that you do not get to “choose” your sexual orientation. Conversation therapy is a harmful practice used to strip the identity



from innocent children. Proven ineffective, conversation therapy is a known and normalized form of abuse. Reports of not only verbal, but physical assault stem from said practices and leave a great deal of trauma from an already vulnerable group of people. How can our country be allowing such detrimental practices go on against human beings; children even? It's time to make a change for the safety of our future."

"While I am not part of the LGBTQ+ community I know that conversion therapy has little to no results. Patients subject to this "therapy" often will never be cured since there is no disease to cure, instead they push their personality deep down and just hope that no one sends them to conversion therapy again. I have never experienced conversion therapy but wouldn't want anyone else to go through that for being themselves."

All testimonials collected and compiled by GirlGov Chester County's 2020-21 LGBTQ+ Rights Committee, comprised of high school members Sahitya Suresh, Alexis Allen, Nishita Jakkam, Diya Kumar, and Aalana Vasquez.