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Testimony of the Massachusetts Psychological Association in support of H. 1190, An Act relative to abusive practices to change sexual orientation and gender identity in minors

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The Massachusetts Psychological Association (MPA) represents over 1,700 psychologists in Massachusetts in carrying out our mission to advance psychology as a science, as a profession, and as a means of promoting human welfare. MPA and its members have long been opposed to so-called conversion therapy. Conversion therapy presupposes that non cisgender sexual orientations are disorders. It has long been used as a way of discriminating against the LGBTQ community.

When MPA reviewed the text of the version of this bill that was introduced last legislative session, we were pleased that Representative Khan, the bill co-sponsors, and various advocacy groups were seeking a ban on conversion therapy. We also had concerns that the text of the bill would have introduced new forms of liability on behavioral health providers. We expressed these concerns in a series of letters to Rep. Khan and the coalition in support of the bill. We also met with the Coalition in-person to discuss how to improve the text of the bill to reduce any potential liability on clinicians engaged in appropriate therapy. We greatly appreciate Rep. Khan and the coalition having worked with us to tighten the definitions in a way that made it clearer that legitimate well-intentioned therapeutic conversations about sexual orientation and gender identity would not be inappropriately discouraged or prohibited.

The MPA is pleased to report to the committee that these efforts resulted in new text in the version of the bill introduced by Rep. Khan this session, with language that was agreeable to both MPA and the original proponents of the bill. This bill has undergone extensive study and fine-tuning of its text.

H1190, An Act relative to abusive practices to change sexual orientation and gender identity in minors has our full support. We respectfully request that the committee recommend H1190 favorably to protect minors from inappropriate therapeutic practices.

Respectfully submitted,

Brian Doherty

Executive Director, Massachusetts Psychological Association