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MEMORANDUM IN SUPPORT

A.3977 (Glick) S.263 (Hoylman)

AN ACT to amend the education law, in relation to prohibiting mental health professionals from engaging in sexual orientation change efforts with a patient under the age of eighteen years and expanding the definition of professional misconduct with respect to mental health professionals

The New York City Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers, representing over 7,000 social workers across the state strongly supports A.3977 (Glick) / S.263 (Hoylman); a bill to prevent mental health professionals from providing sexual orientation change efforts to minors under eighteen by defining such activities as professional misconduct.

This bill well represents the position of the National Association of Social Workers, as we have long held the position that the use of “conversion” and/or “reparative” therapies are explicitly condemned. We have long asserted that “People seek mental health services for many reasons. Accordingly, it is fair to assert that lesbians and gay men seek therapy for the same reasons that heterosexual people do. However, the increase in media campaigns, often coupled with coercive messages from family and community members, has created an environment in which lesbians and gay men often are pressured to seek reparative or conversion therapies, which cannot and will not change sexual orientation. Aligned with the American Psychological Association's (1997) position, NCLGB [NASW's National Committee on Lesbian and Gay Issues] believes that such treatment potentially can lead to severe emotional damage. Specifically, transformational ministries are fueled by stigmatization of lesbians and gay men, which in turn produces the social climate that pressures some people to seek change in sexual orientation. No data demonstrate that reparative or conversion therapies are effective, and in fact they may be harmful.”

In addition, the NASW *Code of Ethics* clearly articulates the principles and values core to the practice of social work. For example: “Social workers respect and promote the right of clients to self-determination and assist clients in their efforts to identify and clarify their goals.” Identifying as lesbian, gay, bi-sexual or transgender is *NOT* a disorder and should, therefore, not be treated as such.

NASW-NYC strongly supports the protection of all LGBT minors by prohibiting sexual orientation change efforts and as such, recommends passage of the A.3977 (Glick)/ S.263 (Hoylman).