

City of Independence, Missouri
City Council
111 E. Maple
Independence, MO 64050
June 7th, 2021

Dear Mayor Weir and Members of the Independence City Council,

I am writing in regards to Resolution 21-752, to be presented at the City Council meeting on Monday, June 7th, 2021. This resolution would direct the Human Relations Commission (HRC) with the task of investigating policies that may allow the use of conversion therapy, and other acts of discrimination, with LGBTQ+ individuals. The state of Missouri does not currently have policies in place to protect LGBTQ+ individuals from being treated with conversion therapy. With a lack of protection on the state level it is imperative that local municipalities protect the members of their community from the emotional damage conversion therapy is known to inflict.

I work as an elementary school counselor in Kansas City, Missouri, and am a licensed social worker. My practice as mental health professional is grounded in a code of ethics maintained by the National Association of Social Workers, which states that conversion therapy of LGBTQ+ individuals is both ineffective and harmful. More specifically, transformational ministries that provide conversion therapy are fueled by stigmatization of the LGBTQ+ community, which in turn produces the social climate that pressures some people to seek change in sexual orientation or identity.

Mayor Weir is moving our city in the right direction, towards the inclusion and celebration of LGBTQ+ community members. My hope is that city council members can support Mayor Weir's resolution to direct the issue of non-discrimination as it pertains to conversion therapy, to the HRC for further evaluation and recommendations.

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration,

Nicoletta Garcia, LMSW



City of Independence, Missouri
City Council
111 E. Maple
Independence, MO 65050

Greetings Mayor Weir and Members of the Independence City Council! I hope this letter finds you well. When my friend, Nicolette Garcia, informed me that today is the day you are going to be presented with Resolution 21-752, I knew I had to share my brief perspective. This resolution would allow the Human Relations Commission to investigate policies that may allow the use of conversion therapy; a discriminatory tactic that has emotionally and psychologically damaged countless brothers and sisters in our LGBTQIA+ communities.

I work as a youth minister for the Community of Christ in Jackson County. For seven years I have had the privilege of helping hundreds of youths feel loved, accepted, and given them a place where they can experience sacred community. Any young person who walked through our doors would be welcomed, no matter the labels our society has placed upon them.

As shown on the Human Rights Campaign webpage, there are 15 professional organizations that declare the dangers of conversation therapy, including but not limited to the American Academy of Pediatrics, American Counseling Association, and the World Psychiatric Association (WPA). WPA states in their Position Statement on Gender Identity and Same-Sex Orientation, Attraction, and Behaviors:

"There is no sound scientific evidence that innate sexual orientation can be changed. Furthermore, so-called treatments of homosexuality can create a setting in which prejudice and discrimination flourish, and they can be potentially harmful (Rao and Jacob 2012). The provision of any intervention purporting to "treat" something that is not a disorder is wholly unethical."

These are respected national and world-renowned organizations whose professional voices matter.

As a Christian minister I often worry about being judged. Not by God, but by those who may label me exclusive, toxic, or part of the systemic injustices that continue to discriminate against our LGBTQIA+ communities. I shamefully have to admit that religion, even my own, has been a conduit for pain, discrimination, and people literally taking their lives because they did not feel loved and accepted. Knowing that, I must push myself to continue to be that inclusive and loving community that Christ has called me to share: Being an advocate with those who are oppressed. Just like Martin Luther King, Gandhi, Malcolm X, Harvey Milk, and Archbishop Oscar Romero: A few true heroes who worked to a better world broken from discrimination. In the Community of Christ, we have principles that we strive to live out in our everyday lives, individually and collectively as a faith community. Below are a few that resonate with me:

- All Are Called
- Unity in Diversity
- Blessings of Community

- Worth of All Persons

I could go on to describe in detail what these four of our nine Enduring Principles truly mean for my church. However, I will simply let the four phrases speak for themselves: All Are Called, Unity in Diversity, Blessings of Community, WORTH OF ALL PERSONS.

Mayor Weir's resolution is a step in the direction of making the City of Independence a better place. A place of welcoming, inclusion, and a space where the worth of all persons is truly lived out. I pray that city council can support Mayor Weirs' resolution to allow the HRC to investigate policies that allow conversation therapy, which discriminate against our LGBTQIA+ brothers and sisters hindering God's call for a loving world.

I deeply appreciate your work and time on this matter.

Peace and Blessings,

Tyler Horringa
Elder in Community of Christ

