Good afternoon and thank you for taking some time out of your day to come and hear what the foster youth of the State of Iowa believe to be issues worth investing in, that are detrimental to the children of Iowa. My name is Jake and I have lived in Des Moines my whole life and as a 22 year old gay man I spent many years trying to disbelieve the many messages I heard associated with being gay; that I was an abomination, that I was disgusting in the eyes of G-d, that I didn’t deserve to live as a sinner, some of these messages coming from even my own blood relatives. I am lucky enough to have had the ability to do a lot of self-recognition and soul searching and even though it took me years I understand that I am exactly who I am supposed to be.

But I am here to talk about the boys and girls and gender non-binary people that were forced to endure any kind of Sexual Orientation Change Effort or Gender Identity Change Effort. And I am here to implore that you take a stance with me in enacting a Bill that would protect minors in the state of Iowa from mental health practitioners attempting to change their sexuality or gender identity through conversion therapy.

I want to highlight why we should prevent licensed professionals from performing these efforts. Sam is a survivor of Sexual Orientation Change Efforts that his parents forced him to endure as a teenager.

He claimed that his therapist started with “the first step” which involved attaching his hands palms up to a table with leather straps. The therapist then placed blocks of ice on each hand while exposing Sam to pictures of two men holding hands as to associate touching men with the “burning cold”

“The second step” was similar but instead of cold ice, copper heating coils were wrapped around his hands and wrists and heat was introduced when he was shown pictures of two men holding hands were shown but the heat was shut down when a heterosexual couple was shown holding hands, after these sessions even hugging his dad caused him to experience what he called “heat flashbacks”

“The third step” came last and with it he tried to commit suicide for the first time. He was strapped into a chair, and small needles were stuck into his fingertips. The needles were attached to electrodes and delivered shocks to him while he was shown pornographic images of two men engaging in sex acts. Sam tried to commit suicide 5 times because of the trauma associated with this barbaric practice

This is child abuse and akin to torture and as people of the great state of Iowa we need to take a stance and outlaw any use of that kind of change effort by mental health practitioners in our state. Conversion therapy significantly violates basic human rights. By supporting this bill, the state of Iowa would be leading the charge in a human rights issue that plagues thousands of youth across the nation, thus creating a safer environment and community for all youth in Iowa, regardless of sexual orientation.

Thank you for your time and I hope I have your support.