



February 16, 2016

The Honorable Ryan Williams
Chair
House Health Subcommittee
114 War Memorial Building
Nashville, TN 37243

Re: House Bill 1840

Dear Chair Williams:

I am writing on behalf of the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT), the national professional association representing the professional interests of more than 62,000 licensed marriage and family therapists (LMFTs) throughout the United States. AAMFT is affiliated with the Tennessee Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (TNAMFT), AAMFT's chapter that represents the interests of LMFTs in Tennessee. The TNAMFT requested that AAMFT review and comment on House Bill 1840.

AAMFT joins TNAMFT in opposing HB 1840. AAMFT believes that this legislation, as currently written, will likely lead to discrimination against some clients. AAMFT members who discriminate would be in violation of the AAMFT Code of Ethics. Standard 1.1 of the AAMFT Code of Ethics states that AAMFT members "provide professional assistance to persons without discrimination on the basis of race, age, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, disability, gender, health status, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity or relationship status."

In addition, AAMFT believes that this legislation is unnecessary. There does not appear to be any evidence that counselors and therapists in Tennessee are being threatened with criminal prosecution or civil action because they refused to counsel or serve a client as to goals or behaviors that conflict with a sincerely held religious belief.

On behalf of our members and our members' clients in Tennessee, AAMFT urges members of the Subcommittee to oppose HB 1840. Thank you for providing AAMFT with an opportunity to comment on this matter.

Sincerely,

Roger D. Smith
Senior Attorney
American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy