

Opposition to Homophobic & Transphobic Laws

The North American Drama Therapy Association (NADTA) has a significant history of championing the dignity, visibility, and accessibility of its members. We seek to promote cultural competency, humility, and sensitivity towards the responsible practice of drama therapy and we promote dialogue around diversity and social justice in all aspects of the organization and profession of drama therapy.

It is with this mission for inclusion in mind that the North American Drama Therapy Association denounces the following:

- The Protecting Freedom of Conscience from Government Discrimination Act (HB 1523), Mississippi
- The Public Facilities Privacy and Security Act (HB2), North Carolina
- House Bill 1840, Tennessee

Although these legal measures claim to protect the rights of people to practice their religion, they decrease the civil and human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, two-spirited, intersex, and queer people (LGBT2SIQ). As such, these two laws and house bill contradict the values upheld by our [Professional Code of Ethics](#), as well as our [Guidelines on Cultural Responsibility](#) which call on drama therapists to demonstrate commitment to the treatment of all persons with dignity and respect.

In Mississippi, the [Protecting Freedom of Conscience Act](#) would allow people to regulate employee and student dress, deny foster care and adoption services, refuse psychological services and allow them to discipline, fire or refrain from hiring individuals whose “conduct or religious beliefs are inconsistent with those of the religious organization”.

In North Carolina, the [Public Facilities Privacy and Security Act](#) requires that transgender people only use bathrooms that correspond with the sex assigned on their birth certificate. As such, this act legalizes the policing of people’s bodies, gender expression, and gender identity. It leaves gender nonconforming individuals and communities vulnerable to violence. This law further threatens LGBT2SIQ people’s access to services, accommodation and employment protection against discrimination. Even with Governor McCrory’s latest amendment, [Executive Order 93](#), the law continues to leave LGBT2SIQ people without legal protection from discrimination and gender nonconforming individuals with the threat of being harassed, fined and arrested for their choice of washroom.

[Tennessee House Bill 1840](#) will threaten equal access to mental health services. This bill allows counselors and therapists to refuse to see clients whose goals, desired outcomes, or behaviors conflict with the religious beliefs of the counselor. This leaves clients vulnerable to homophobia, transphobia, and other forms of cultural oppression.

Similar laws protecting discrimination against LGBT2SIQ people have been proposed in Tennessee, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky and West Virginia as well as other states, with each

one being a threat to the human rights of millions of Americans and others living and visiting the United States.

As mental health practitioners we are aware of the negative impacts of discrimination on mental health. The cumulative effects of homophobia and transphobia place LGBT2SIQ people at higher risk for severe mental health problems. These laws are bad for people's health, they do not promote inclusion and belonging, they threaten people's livelihood, access to services, and sense of belonging and security in the world.

The NADTA adds its name to the hundreds of mental health practitioners, organizations, businesses, artists, and activists who continue to condemn these laws and proposed bills.

The NADTA asks that:

- Governor Bill Haslam veto the Tennessee House Bill 1840 ([as of April 18th it has been pulled from consideration this year for further study](#)).
- The state government of North Carolina repeal The North Carolina's Public Facilities Privacy and Security Act; and that
- The state government of Mississippi repeal the Mississippi's Protecting Freedom of Conscience from Government Discrimination Act.

You can take action on these legal measures by [contacting your elected officials here](#). We will also be providing opportunities for members of our community to dialogue and share how these and similar laws have impacted us, our clients and our communities. As drama therapists we have a unique opportunity to use our imagination and creativity to engage in visionary forms of advocacy and change-making, please look for upcoming invitations to participate.

In solidarity with people whose identities, livelihood, access to services and sense of security have been threatened and impacted by transphobia and homophobia.

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