[DATE]

The Honorable Kenneth LaValle,

New York State Senate

806 Legislative Office Building

Albany, New York 12224

RE: Senate Bill 121 (Hoylman)

Dear Senator LaValle,

As a social worker in New York State, I am writing to urge your support of Senate Bill 121 (Assembly Bill 4958), 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

As a clinician and a member of the National Association of Social Workers, this bill well represents our collective position that the use of “conversion” and/or “reparative” therapies is explicitly condemned. 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. Such treatment can potentially lead to severe emotional damage, increases in the stigmatization of lesbians and gay men and promotion of a social climate that pressures individuals to seek changes in sexual orientation despite the fact that no data demonstrates effective outcomes associated with reparative or conversion therapies.

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.

Senate Bill.121 (Hoylman) is currently in the Senate Higher Education Committee and as such I request your support in advancing it this session. I thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

[SIGNATURE]

CC: Senator Brad Hoylman