

On January 18, 2018, Amy testified before the Virginia Senate's Education and Health Committee. This was her third time providing expert testimony on proposed bans to end Conversion Therapy for Minors (SB245). Conversion Therapy is an archaic practice, which often has religious ties, and is intended to change one's sexual orientation or gender identity. It is not empirically based and has been shown to have sometimes disastrous results. Sometimes it is "talk therapy" and other times it utilizes gay porn and electric shock to serve as aversion.

Amy was first called to provide testimony on behalf of NASP in 2014 during a blizzard. NASP had gotten a call asking for support in providing testimony in support of the proposed ban. They did a search through the Member Profiles for someone local who had listed LGBTQ+ as an interest. Amy got a call, during an admin-only snow day asking if she could be down in Richmond the following morning at 8 am to testify. She showed up, heart pounding, and read testimony which had been vetted by NASP and several other agencies. She was subsequently asked to co-write articles for local newspapers and then asked by the Alliance for Progressive Values to provide testimony every other year when the bill comes up. It sometimes results in hate mail and you learn not to read the comments. J During off-years she sometimes speaks to the media.

As a School Psychologist, advocacy is an often overlooked role we need to play more of. Providing testimony is a frustrating process, especially in socially conservative Virginia. I was frequently given one day's notice or less to get down to Richmond with what starts as 7 minute testimony and ends up being 1 minute. It's aggravating because you know with one minute to speak, you think no one is listening. But in truth, they are. The ban didn't make it out of subcommittee but by only one vote this time so progress is being made. Social Justice exists for a reason. We have the power and privilege to speak for those whose voices aren't heard. Giving voice to those without provides validation, affirmation, and strength, which helps to advance the rights of those who are being marginalized.