



Official Response:

Tyler Moniz Project and Partnership with Coffee Oasis on Bainbridge Island

Kitsap Pride Network supports the work of the Tyler Moniz Project and its efforts to help young people through community programs that “promote happiness, well-being, and hope.” This aligns with our mission to “celebrate, support, and unite” the LGBT community in Kitsap County.

LGBT youth are particularly vulnerable to the issues the Tyler Moniz Project hopes to address, including homelessness, depression, and suicide. For example, an estimated 40% of all clients served through programs for homeless youth identify as LGBT. Often these kids are forced to leave home because they are rejected by their families.

Shame, bullying, and fear also drive mental health issues among LGBT youth, who face higher rates of depression, drug use, and suicide than their peers. Lesbian, gay, or bisexual youth in grades 7-12 are twice as likely to attempt suicide, while as many as 40% of transgender or non-binary youth have attempted suicide.

These statistics point to unique issues among LGBT youth that need to be addressed with understanding and care. The Tyler Moniz Project has the potential to go a long way in helping to save these young lives.

Unquestionably, their proposed partner, Coffee Oasis, has done good and important work in Kitsap County. It must also be acknowledged that Coffee Oasis’ direct connection to The Refuge Church, which states as a core anchor of its faith that marriage is “a covenant between one man and one woman,” among other anti-LGBT beliefs, is troublesome. While Coffee Oasis maintains they do not discriminate on the basis of gender identity or sexual orientation, there is a chasm between tolerance and acceptance. We are concerned that Coffee Oasis simply cannot separate religious doctrine from their treatment of LGBT staff or clients, no matter how pure their intentions.

To ensure the needs of all youth—especially the most vulnerable—are met, we would strongly encourage this Council to consider all possible options before moving forward. We support and would like to participate in any future conversations about how to fulfill the mission of the Tyler Moniz Project to protect and best serve **all** youth in need. The lives of these young people are too important to not be sure about the path forward.