

California Bans Sex Orientation Therapy for Minors

California Gov. Jerry Brown signed a bill Saturday that will ban the controversial “reparative therapy” for minor struggling with gender confusion.

The outlawed therapy is used to help suppress homosexual desires from individuals wishing to be straight. With this bill, parents will not be able to seek conversion therapy for their children under the age of 18, even if the child requests it, beginning on Jan. 1.

Brown says the therapies “have no basis in science or medicine and they will now be relegated to the dustbin of quackery.”

Democratic Sen. Ted Lieu spearheaded SB1172, which was approved by the California Senate earlier this summer. The California Assembly passed the bill in late August. It is the first state to ban the controversial form of psychotherapy.

“This law undermines parental rights,” noted Mat Staver, founder and chairman of Liberty Counsel. “Mental health decisions should be left to the patient, the parents and the counselors—not to the government to license one viewpoint.”

Anticipating that Brown would sign the bill, Liberty Counsel has prepared a lawsuit on behalf of counselors, parents and their minor children, and the National Association for Research and Therapy of Homosexuality.

“The California governor and legislature are putting their own preconceived notions and political ideology ahead of children and their rights to get access to counseling that meets their needs,” Staver said. “A number of minors who have struggled

with same-sex attraction have been able to reduce or eliminate the stress and conflicts in their lives by receiving counseling of their choice, which best meets their needs and religious convictions.

"This bill will harm children, stress families and place counselors in a catch-22, because they will be forced to violate their licensing ethical codes," Staver.

Liberty Counsel argues that the language of the law, which defines "sexual orientation change efforts" as any practice that is designed to reduce or eliminate same-sex attraction, will prohibit any counseling that does not affirm and encourage experimentation with or acceptance of same-sex attractions, regardless of whether those feelings and attractions are unwanted by the counselee.

If the counselor does not provide the client with such counseling or a source where such counseling may be obtained when the client requests same, Liberty explains, the counselor will also violate their licensing ethical code.

"This bill and the ethical codes of all of the licensing boards in California are on an inevitable collision course," Staver said. "The licenses of countless mental health professionals hang in the balance."

The organization Parents and Friends of Ex-Gays & Gays also opposes the bill, calling it unconstitutional.

"As parents of gays and ex-gays, we are ashamed of your willingness to take action against parents, children and the family in order to support gay activists," the group wrote in an open letter to Lieu in August.

"California is not a socialist state and our children do not belong to the government, subject to the ideology of the state over the objections of their parents," the group said.

However, Equality California says the law “reaffirms the freedom of clergy to make faith-based decisions regarding which marriages they solemnize and clarifies that those decisions have no bearing on tax-exempt status.”