

Gov. Chris Christie's Ban on Change Therapy Heads to Appeals Court

Liberty Counsel filed its opening brief at the federal court of appeals against the New Jersey ban on change therapy. A3371, signed by Gov. Chris Christie, prohibits licensed counselors from providing any counsel to change or reduce unwanted same-sex attractions, behaviors or identity to minors.

"A3371 is far more scandalous than the George Washington Bridge lane closure," said Mat Staver, founder and chairman of Liberty Counsel. "Gov. Christie signed a bill that blocks licensed counselors from providing and young people from receiving any counsel to change unwanted same-sex attractions, behaviors, mannerisms or identity. This law is causing immediate harm to young people and to licensed counselors."

"A3371 invades the sacrosanct relationship between counselor and client by prohibiting therapeutic conversations that assist a minor to reduce or eliminate unwanted same-sex attractions, behaviors, or identity while permitting conversations that affirm or approve them," Staver told the court in the brief.

The district court found that the counseling of licensed New Jersey counselors is not entitled to any **First Amendment** protection whatsoever, a notion that ignores long-established precedent of the Supreme Court.

"Far from being a First Amendment orphan, professional speech may be entitled to the strongest protection our Constitution has to offer," said Staver.

"A3371 is a textbook example of viewpoint discrimination. The

legislation explicitly prohibits licensed counselors from providing, and clients from receiving, any counsel to reduce or eliminate unwanted same-sex attractions, behavior or identity,” Staver told the court.

“Counselors can only affirm same-sex attractions even though the clients insist that such attractions are unwanted and they want to change. Depriving these young people of beneficial counsel of their choice is dangerous and is causing immediate harm to our clients,” concluded Staver.