

Same-Sex Therapy Ban May Get Overturned

While gays are celebrating the end of the same-sex therapy ban in California, Christian groups are moving to undo liberal Gov. Jerry Brown's legislative handiwork.

Liberty Counsel on Thursday filed suit in federal court challenging the new law (SB 1172) that bans any counseling to diminish, eliminate, or manage **same-sex** sexual attractions.

Liberty Counsel represents several parents and their children who are receiving and benefiting from such counseling, several licensed counselors, the National Association for Research and Therapy of Homosexuality (NARTH), and the American Association for Christian Counselors (AACC), an organization with about 50,000 professional counseling members.

"This law places the state between the client and the counselor. This law intrudes on a client's fundamental right of self-determination to seek counseling that aligns with his/her religious and moral values. This law forces counselors to overrule the will of their clients who choose to prioritize their religious or moral values above unwanted same-sex sexual attraction," says Mat Staver, founder and chairman of Liberty Counsel.

As Staver sees it, the law forces clients to receive and counselors to provide only one viewpoint on the subject of **same-sex attractions**, even when the client does not want to act on those attractions. This law even forbids counselors from referring clients to someone of their choice. For the state to assume that it knows best what kind of counseling individuals should receive is the height of hubris and ignorance, Staver argues.

"The counselor will be forced to disregard the client's

religious beliefs or change them. This law and the ethical codes of all of the licensing boards are on an inevitable collision course. The licenses of countless mental health professionals hang in the balance. If counselors obey the law, they will violate existing ethical codes because they will be forced to overrule their clients' right to self-determination," Staver explains.

"If counselors provide counsel or referral to clients seeking to diminish or manage same-sex sexual attractions, they will violate the new law. Counselors will be damned no matter what they do. Our minor clients will suffer irreparable harm, because they will no longer be able to receive the kind of counseling they have chosen which they believe has helped them."

The law defines "sexual orientation change efforts" as any practice that is designed to reduce or eliminate same-sex attraction. Such broad language 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.

"This law is an astounding violation of the right to free speech and religious liberty," Staver concludes. "Clients have the right to receive information that aligns with their values, and counselors have the right and the duty to provide information to help the clients in pursuit of their right to self-determination."