Legal Bans on "Conversion Therapy"
Ruth Institute Position Statement
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April 2022

Note: this is a general statement about the concept of banning change allowing therapy. This statement does not address the details of individual bills, which may vary from state to state.

"Conversion Therapy" is a misnomer. The term "conversion therapy" is an ideologically loaded term, invented by the opponents of any therapeutic intervention to address the problems in living associated with same sex attraction. A more accurate term would be "Change Allowing Therapy," meaning that the therapeutic intervention strives to allow the client to change their patterns of thoughts, behaviors, feelings, and attractions in accordance with their own beliefs and goals. Another appropriately descriptive term would be "Sexual Orientation Change Efforts," meaning the therapy attempts to change the client's patterns of thoughts, behaviors, feelings, and attractions. But like virtually all forms of psychological therapeutic interventions, client and therapist alike realize there is no guarantee that all the presenting problems will be completely solved.

Banning "Conversion Therapy" is Unnecessary: Torture is already illegal. If religious groups are secretly torturing people, this can be prosecuted under existing law.

Banning "Conversion Therapy" is illogical: The underlying premise of these bans is that sexual orientation is an immutable trait. This is a very strong claim. Even a single person who successfully changes their sexual orientation is sufficient to refute it. But there are in fact numerous examples of people who change their patterns of thoughts, behaviors, feelings, and attractions.[1]

Opponents of change respond to these examples by saying: "That person wasn't really 'gay' to begin with." Or, they might say, "That person will change back to their authentic identity sooner or later." How many years of heterosexual living do these critics require to be convinced? Is 14 years of marriage to an opposite sex partner enough? Is fathering or giving birth to multiple children enough?

These responses *assume* the very point that *needs to be proven*. Opponents of these therapies are unwilling to accept any counter example as evidence.

Banning "Conversion Therapy" is unscientific: The underlying premise of these bans is that sexual orientation is an inborn trait. There are two problems with this idea.

There can be multiple causes of persistent same sex attraction: According to the American Psychological Association: *There is no consensus among scientists about the exact reasons that an individual develops a heterosexual, bisexual, gay or lesbian orientation. Although much research has examined the possible genetic, hormonal, developmental, social, and cultural influences on sexual orientation, no findings have emerged that permit scientists to conclude that sexual orientation is*

[1] Examples are collected in "Changed:#OnceGayStories," https://changedmovement.com/changed-book

determined by any particular factor or factors. Many think that nature and nurture both play complex roles; most people experience little or no sense of choice about their sexual orientation.[2]

There is no "gay gene." The best of existing scientific evidence is that there is no "gay gene." A large-scale genetic study found that the heritability of same-sex orientation was very weak, only .32 on a scale of 0 (no heritability to 1 (totally heritability.) [3] The lead author of this study told the New York Times, "It will be basically impossible to predict one's sexual activity or orientation just from genetics."[4]

Sexual Orientation Change Efforts are NOT intrinsically harmful. The most recent research decisively refutes this canard. People who went to SOCE are NOT more likely to attempt suicide.[5]

Some commonly accepted testimony against "conversion therapy" is almost certainly false. Sam Brinton has testified around the world about his experience with "conversion therapy." A team of forensic psychologists did a thorough three-pronged analysis of some of his public statements. These experts concluded that crucial parts of his testimony were "highly deceptive." [6]

Banning "Conversion Therapy" is too broad: Banning talk therapy based on the content of the talk is certainly an infringement on free speech. Broad-brush bans will have a chilling effect on private conversations in pastoral settings as well as therapists' offices.

Banning "Conversion Therapy" is Cruel: People who experience same sex attraction are more likely to have experienced sexual and other forms of abuse, according to one study, nearly twice as likely.[7] These experiences may be related in complex ways to their current feelings and behaviors. Broad-brush bans on talk therapy relating to sexual orientation will have a chilling effect on the therapeutic community, making therapists less willing to discuss these difficult but crucial connections. Thus, the people who most need therapeutic assistance will be hobbled in their attempts to discuss anything that may be even remotely connected to same sex attraction.

Dr. Jennifer Roback Morse is the Founder and President of the Ruth Institute, an international interfaith coalition based in Lake Charles Louisiana, to defend the family.

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[2] American Psychological Association website: https://www.apa.org/topics/lgbtq/orientation Last accessed, April 27, 2022.

[3] Ganna et.al, "Large-scale GWAS reveals insights into the genetic architecture of same-sex sexual behavior," ***Science*** 30 August 2019. https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.aat7693 as described by Paul Sullins om "'Born That Way' No More: The New Science of Sexual Orientation," Public Discourse, September 30, 2019, https://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2019/09/57342/

[4] "Many Genes Influence Same-Sex Sexuality, Not a Single 'Gay Gene,'" New York Times, August 29, 2019. https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/29/science/gay-gene-sex.html?action=click&module=RelatedLinks&pgtype=Article

[5] Paul Sullins, "Absence of Behavioral Harm Following Non-efficacious Sexual Orientation Change Efforts," ***Frontiers in Psychology***, Feb. 2, 2022. https://europepmc.org/article/PMC/PMC8847185 This paper is thoroughly discussed in this video: https://youtu.be/hgEtGBebbmg

[6] "Conversion Therapy Bans Based on Lies?" Susan Constantine presentation at Ruth Institute 4th Annual Summit. https://youtu.be/49s3VzNfOB4

[7] See Table 2 of "Disparities in Adverse Childhood Experiences among Sexual Minority and Heterosexual Adults: Results from a Multi-State Probability-Based Sample," Judith Anderson and John Blosnich, PLOS ONE 8, no. 1 (2013): e54691, https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0054691