



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on September 5, 2012

Calif. Passes Ban on Counseling for Same-sex Attraction; N.J. May Be Next

As California prepares to implement a ban on “reparative therapy” for minors struggling with same-sex attraction, New Jersey is gearing up to pass its own prohibition against the counseling therapy. The [Los Angeles Times](#) reported that California’s state legislature passed its ban on “sexual-conversion therapy for minors,” and on August 30 sent the bill to Gov. Jerry Brown for his signature, which would make the state the first to restrict such options to minors.



Democratic State Senator Ted Lieu, who proposed the bill, called counseling that has helped countless individuals leave the homosexual lifestyle “junk science” that has been condemned by the American Psychiatric Association. During debate on the bill, openly homosexual state assemblyman Ricardo Lara spoke aggressively for its passage, declaring that “one of our number-one priorities in this house is to protect the next generation of Californians. And some of those are sissy boys. And some of those sissy boys grow up to be Assembly members. And some of those sissy boys need help. And we are here to stand with those sissy boys.”

Another openly homosexual legislator, Speaker of the State Assembly John Perez, said during debate on the bill that “it is inappropriate for anyone, including parents, to subject anybody to dehumanizing activity” — referring to the conversion therapy.

Opponents of the measure said the state should not be telling parents what they can or cannot do to help their children. “There are people who may want counseling on this,” said Republican State Senator Doug La Malfa, “and this legislation is so far reaching it eliminates the option. That’s not right.”

Among private groups opposing the ban were the California Catholic Conference, Parents and Friends of Ex-Gays and Gays (PFOX), and the National Association for Research and Therapy of Homosexuality (NARTH). The *Los Angeles Times* quoted Christopher Rosik, a therapist with NARTH, as saying that conversion therapy is not harmful, and the legislation would cut off a legitimate option for parents wishing to help their children deal with unwanted same-sex attraction. “As is plainly evident,” Rosik said prior to the bill’s passage, “should SB 1172 become law, licensed therapists in California who would otherwise be willing to assist minor clients in modifying their unwanted same-sex attractions and behaviors will be seriously jeopardizing their professional livelihoods.”

At least one conservative legal advocacy group has promised to intervene if Brown does indeed sign the bill into law. Matt Staver, founder and chairman of [Liberty Counsel](#), said that his group would file suit on behalf of counselors, parents, and minors who have an active interest in such therapy. “If the governor signs this law, mental health professionals will find themselves in a catch-22,” Staver said. He explained that if an individual is experiencing conflict between religious beliefs and same-sex attractions and wants to incorporate those beliefs to deal with the issue, a counselor is ethically obligated to directly help the client or refer to someone else who can help. But under the California measure the counselor would be forced to disregard the client’s religious beliefs and ignore the cry for



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help. "This bill will harm minors, undermine parental rights, and interfere with the rights of counselors," he said. "This bill and the ethical codes of all of the licensing boards in California are on an inevitable collision course. The licenses of countless mental health professionals hang in the balance." He added that the "implications of the government determining what counseling treatments are acceptable should concern every counselor and citizen. That decision should be left to the patient, the parents, and the doctors. The government has no place in that conversation."

Meanwhile, a New Jersey state legislator has stepped forward to champion similar legislation in his state. [NewJerseyToday.net](#) reported that Democratic State Assemblyman Tim Eustace announced plans to introduce a bill in the legislature to ban the use of change therapy on minors. "Studies and personal testimony have shown this practice creates irreparable harm on young people struggling to come to terms with their sexuality," Eustace claimed. "Forcing someone to deny their innate feelings and their very existence has led to depression, suicidal tendencies, and other untold harm. Leading psychological professionals agree that this practice has no place in legitimate mental health therapies."

On the other side, there is a small army of conservative, Christian, and other therapists who maintain that change is possible for anyone suffering from same-sex attraction. One of the leading voices in that group is NARTH founder Joseph Nicolosi, who warned that laws such as the ones slated to ban change-therapy in California and New Jersey are dangerous and ill-advised. "We don't believe there is such a thing as a gay teen, because no teen is mature enough to define himself as gay," Nicolosi told the [Christian Science Monitor](#). He said that the danger of such laws is that they try to "kill simple attempts at understanding by saying gayness is static and 'How dare you try to change someone's personhood?'" Nicolosi pointed to the case of David Pickup, a California man who successfully dealt with his same-sex attraction via such therapy. "We traced my depression and emotions and gender confusions to being abused sexually as a child," Pickup told the *Monitor*. "This therapy helped me to identify my issues of unmet approval and need for self-esteem, and simultaneously I noticed that my occasional erotic attraction to men wasn't there anymore, and my attraction to women increased 100 percent. Reparative therapy helped save my life."

A recent study by [People Can Change](#), an organization which assists individuals in dealing with unwanted same-sex attraction (SSA), found that over half of the people seeking such help reported that they benefited from counseling. The [Christian Post](#) reported that the survey, released August 31, found that "55 percent of those who sought out this kind of counseling experienced SSA with less intensity and frequency than before they received help."

Wayne Besen of Truth Wins Out, a pro-homosexual organization that seeks to discount claims that people can overcome same-sex attraction, told the *Christian Post* that the People Can Change study is "completely unscientific and bogus," because those participating in the study already had connections to the organization. "What they're doing is absolute desperation, scientifically bankrupt," Besen insisted.

But Rich Wyler, founder and director of People Can Change, said, "Hundreds of people are telling us their counseling worked, they benefited significantly, it helped them feel better about themselves — and in some cases it even saved their lives." He noted that while the voices of such individuals have been ignored "by pro-gay activists and mainstream media in favor of a more politically correct view ... the experience of these men and women is real. It is valid.... Their voluntary choice to pursue change deserves respect."



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