

California Senate passes ban on therapy to change sexual orientation

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SACRAMENTO, Calif. -- The state Senate has passed a bill banning psychiatrists, psychologists and other mental health practitioners from engaging in efforts to change the sexual orientation of any patient/client under 18 regardless of the teen's willingness to undergo that therapy or the willingness of a parent, guardian or other person to authorize such efforts.

The bill now moves to the Assembly, which has until Aug. 31 to send the bill to Gov. Jerry Brown.

Supporters of the bill say so-called reparative or conversion therapy is harmful to minors and that the ban provides needed protections for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth.

The ban does not extend to psychotherapies that aim to provide acceptance, support and understanding of clients who are attracted to a person of the same sex or who are exploring sexual identity as long as there is no effort to change orientation or reduce or eliminate sexual or romantic attractions.

According to the American Psychiatric Association, conversion therapy is "based upon the assumption that homosexuality is a mental disorder or based upon the a priori assumption that a patient should change his/her homosexual orientation." The APA opposes such therapy.

Joseph Nicolosi, a well-known proponent of reparative therapy, said he believes homosexuality is a form of arrested psychosexual development that can be repaired through various conditionings including avoidance of contact with homosexuals, engaging in traditional male activities such as sports, increasing time spent with heterosexuals and participating in group therapy.

Christian transformational ministries propose the use of prayer, religious conversion and individual and group counseling to change a homosexual's orientation.

Supporters of the California ban on such therapies for those under 18 include Equality California, Mental Health America of Northern California, the California Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers, and the National Center for Lesbian Rights.

Opponents include the California Catholic Conference, the California Association for Licensed Professional Clinical Counselors, and the California Association of Marriage and Family Therapists.

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