



HF 16

To ban conversion therapy for those under 18 and vulnerable adults.

Testimony, Ellen J. Kennedy, Ph.D.

January 18, 2023, 1:00 pm CT, 200 State Office Building
Human Services Policy Committee - Chair Peter Fischer

Chair Fischer, committee members,

I am Dr. Ellen Kennedy, the executive director of World Without Genocide and adjunct professor at Mitchell Hamline School of Law.

I speak today on behalf of a member of my own family and for all others who are marginalized because of who they are.

Some groups maintain that an individual can change their sexual orientation or gender identity through religious efforts or "conversion" or reparative therapy. Research has shown this to be false. The therapy is, in fact, harmful, especially for minors, and causes serious psychological harm.

I will highlight significant sources of opposition to conversion therapy.

First, cities and states. Twenty states have banned this practice: from California to Maine, Illinois to New Mexico. These 20 state laws were passed nearly evenly by both Republican and Democratic governors.

102 cities and counties in 15 states have passed restrictions¹ - cities from Alaska to Arizona, Florida to Wisconsin - and 11 Minnesota cities.^{2 3}

Second, the United States Supreme Court. California and New Jersey both have anti-conversion therapy laws. Challenges from those states went to the Supreme Court, which affirmed that it is constitutional to ban conversion therapy.

Third, every major medical and mental health organization in the US condemns the use of conversion therapy on young people because of its dangerous effects on their well-being: the

¹ Alaska, Arizona, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, West Virginia, Wisconsin.

² Bloomington, Duluth, Minneapolis, Northfield, Red Wing, Richfield, Robbinsdale, Roseville, St. Paul, West St. Paul, Winona.

³ https://www.lgbtmap.org/equality-maps/conversion_therapy

American Psychological Association, the American Psychiatric Association, the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the American Medical Association,

Fourth, the major legal organization in the United States supports banning conversion therapy. In 2015, the American Bar Association, which includes 60,000 lawyers, passed a resolution urging all state and local governments to ban conversion therapy.

Fifth, at the international level, the UN has stated that conversion therapy is degrading and discriminatory. Twenty-two countries have banned conversion therapy, including Canada, France, Germany, and New Zealand.⁴

And finally, a national survey shows that public opinion favors a ban on conversion therapy. A Reuters poll⁵ of more than 2,200 U.S. adults showed that a majority of those surveyed want conversion therapy for those under age 18 to be illegal.

These sources of opposition include Republican and Democratic governors and legislators throughout the country; the U.S. Supreme Court; medical professionals; lawyers; the United Nations and countries around the world; and the general public. They urge us to allow young people to be fully valued in the human family as they are.

Thank you.

⁴ <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/about-us/news/which-countries-have-already-banned-conversion-therapy>

⁵ <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/2053168020966874>. Only 18% support conversion therapy and 26% have no opinion. Cited from Flores, A. R., Mallory, C., & Conron, K. J. (2020). Public attitudes about emergent issues in LGBTQ rights: Conversion therapy and religious refusals. *Research & Politics*, 7(4). <https://doi.org/10.1177/2053168020966874>