

INSIGHTS + NEWS

#BornPerfect: States Seek to Outlaw Conversion Therapy

BY CHELSIE A. VOKES • APRIL 12, 2018

What is conversion therapy?

Conversion therapy, sometimes known as “reparative therapy,” is the pseudo-psychological practice of trying to change an individual’s sexual orientation or identity, most commonly from homosexual or bisexual to heterosexual. To date, several states (including those below) have enacted laws to protect people from the physical, mental, and emotional harms of conversion therapy.

Maryland

Maryland is set to become the eleventh state to ban “conversion therapy.” Maryland’s Senate passed a bill, entitled the [Youth Mental Health Protection Act](#), on March 28, 2018. If it becomes law, Maryland’s Bill will prohibit licensed mental health or childcare practitioners from trying to change the sexual orientation or gender identity of a minor. In support of the Bill, legislators cited to a Report titled, [Appropriate Therapeutic Responses to Sexual Orientation](#), published by the American Psychological Association (“APA Report”). The APA Report found that conversion therapy has no effect on an individual’s sexual orientation and/or gender identity and poses a great risk of causing psychological harm. Maryland’s Bill is now on its way to the Governor’s desk, where he must sign it before it becomes law.

Hawaii

Close behind Maryland, Hawaii is hoping to become the twelfth state to ban conversion therapy practiced on minors. On April 11, 2018, Hawaii’s House of Representatives passed A Bill for an Act Relating to Minors. If it becomes law, [Hawaii’s Bill](#) will prohibit licensed counselors from engaging in “sexual orientation change efforts” on persons under eighteen. Hawaii’s Bill will now head to a Committee, where they will hash out the differences between the Senate and House versions of the Bill. Hawaii’s Governor will then have a chance to sign the final version into law.

Massachusetts

Last year, Massachusetts proposed its own Bill seeking to ban licensed medical, mental health and human service professionals from practicing conversion therapy on minors. However [Massachusetts’ Bill](#) is currently in limbo, as it sits in the House’s Committee on Ways and Means awaiting further consideration.