



Legislation Text

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Proposed Res. No. 613-A

Resolution calling on the American Psychological and American Psychiatric Associations to immediately pass resolutions declaring the practice of “curative therapy,” also known as “reparative” or “conversion” therapy, or any attempt to change, alter, or “correct” a person’s sexual orientation, to be unethical.

By Council Members Dromm, Chin, Gentile, Johnson, Lander, Levine, Palma, Richards, Rosenthal, Menchaca, Rodriguez, Grodenchik and Levin

Whereas, The Williams Institute, in 2011, estimated that 3.5% of the adults in the United States identify as gay, lesbian, or bisexual, and more than 19 million people in the United States have had a same-sex sexual experience; and

Whereas, The American Psychiatric Association (APA) began removing homosexuality from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (“DSM”) in 1973 and completely removed homosexuality from the DSM in 1986; and

Whereas, The APA further reported that “...societal ignorance, prejudice and pressure to conform to heterosexual desires are the real dangers to gay people’s mental health”, according to a 1997 statement on "conversion" or "reparative" therapy; and

Whereas, The World Health Organization removed homosexuality from the International Classification of Diseases in 1990; and

Whereas, Despite the fact that homosexuality is not an illness and therefore cannot be cured, certain practitioners have nonetheless attempted to “cure” homosexuality using a variety of techniques, many of which are often performed on children; and

Whereas, Both the American Medical Association and the American Academy of Pediatrics oppose the

use of so-called reparative or conversion therapy; and

Whereas, The Pan American Health Organization (The World Health Organization's North and South American division) has found that reparative therapy contributes to the stigmatization of homosexuality, which leads to bullying and trauma, and in May 2012 condemned such treatment as a "a serious threat to the health and well-being-even the lives-of affected people"; and

Whereas, The American Psychological Association passed a resolution in 2009 stating that the practice of curative therapy can cause depression and suicide attempts; and

Whereas, Dr. Robert Spitzer, M.D., a retired Professor of Psychiatry at Columbia University, former researcher at the Columbia University Center for Psychoanalytic Training and Research, and the author of a widely circulated and often cited study published in 2001 which lent credence to curative or restorative therapy, apologized to the gay community for that report in a letter sent in 2012; and

Whereas, Dr. Spitzer's letter stated "I believe I owe the gay community an apology for my study making unproven claims of the efficacy of reparative therapy"; and

Whereas, The letter by Dr. Spitzer went on to say "I also apologize to any gay person who wasted time and energy undertaking some form of reparative therapy because they believed that I had proven that reparative therapy works with some "highly motivated individuals"; and

Whereas, In 2012, the state of California passed a law banning so-called curative therapy for any patient under 18 years of age, which legislation was stayed as it was being appealed on First Amendment grounds, and ultimately ruled constitutional by the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit; and

Whereas, New Jersey Governor Chris Christie signed legislation into law in 2012 concerning the protection of minors from attempts to change sexual orientation; and

Whereas, That New Jersey law quotes from an APA report that states, in part, "In the last four decades, 'reparative' therapists have not produced any rigorous scientific research to substantiate their claims of cure"; and

Whereas, The APA report further quotes and says: “Until there is such research available, [the American Psychiatric Association] recommends that ethical practitioners refrain from attempts to change individuals’ sexual orientation, keeping in mind the medical dictum to first, do no harm”; and

Whereas, The American Psychological Association found that efforts to change a child’s sexual orientation can cause “critical health risks” like depression, substance abuse and suicidal thoughts; and;

Whereas, Health care professionals who participate in such discredited therapies should be subject to sanctions for violating the ethics and standards of their professions; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls on the American Psychological and American Psychiatric Associations to immediately pass resolutions declaring the practice of “curative therapy,” also known as “reparative” or “conversion” therapy, or any attempt to change, alter, or “correct” a person’s sexual orientation, to be unethical.

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