



# 2018 Bill Highlights

As of 1/17/2018

## HB 717 & SB 696 – Conversion Therapy

**Sponsor:** Representatives Jenne (D-Hollywood) & Silvers (D-West Palm Beach) & Senator Rodriguez (D-Miami)

**Target Population:** Any individual younger than age 18 who identifies as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and/or questioning, as well as licensed healthcare providers.

**Summary:** Defines “conversion therapy” as any practice or treatment performed with the goal of changing an individual’s sexual orientation, including, but not limited to, efforts to change behavior, gender identity or gender expression or to reduce or eliminate sexual or romantic attraction or feelings toward a person of the same gender. Prohibits various health practitioners and persons who are licensed to provide professional counseling from practicing or performing conversion therapy with a minor, and makes any person or practitioner who violates this prohibition subject to specified disciplinary proceedings by the Department of Health and the appropriate board.

### How do the Bills Differ?

- The bills are identical.

## **Impact:**

“Conversion therapy” has been proven to be detrimental to the physical and emotional well-being of children. Discredited by all major medical and mental health associations as both ineffective and dangerous, conversion or “reparative” therapy can result in increased risk for depression, anxiety, substance use and suicide. Children are proven to be especially vulnerable to the lasting negative effects of this practice.

Numerous organizations, representing more than 480,000 mental health professionals, have all taken the position that homosexuality is not a mental disorder and thus not something that needs to or can be “cured.” Despite this fact, Florida’s state law does not currently ban counseling and health practitioners from engaging in conversion therapy with youth under the age of 18.

As data conservatively suggests that 7% of youth in Florida openly identify as LGBTQ, this bill could impact a significant number of children in the state. Additionally, nine other states and the District of Columbia have banned the use of conversion therapy on minors. In Florida, over 10 cities and Palm Beach County have already banned the practice locally.

Conversion therapy is ineffective and dangerous, and has been denounced by all major medical and mental health organizations. The Children’s Campaign supports banning and providing legal penalties for this practice in order to protect a group of children already vulnerable to trauma due to experiences with prejudice.