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Leading Social Work Organizations in New York State Applaud New York City Council's Vote to Ban Conversion Therapy

(ALBANY, NY, December 4, 2017) — Leaders of the National Association of Social Workers - New York State (NASW-NYS) and New York City (NASW-NYC) Chapters and the New York State Society for Clinical Social Work (NYSSCSW) commends the New York City Council's recent vote to ban so-called 'conversion therapy', [a practice that has been discredited and denounced by every major health and mental health professions](#). The Council passed a bill barring anyone from charging a fee for so-called therapies that seek to change a person's sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

"NASW-NYS has long condemned the use of conversion therapy and applauds the New York City Council on its vote," said Samantha Howell, Esq., Executive Director of the National Association of Social Workers – New York State Chapter. "The philosophy behind reparative therapies are anathema to the NASW Code of Ethics, oppress people in the LGBTQ community, and represent a practice abhorred by the mental health profession. We hope the State will take notice and at least pass legislation banning licensed mental health providers from engaging in such practices."

"As social workers, we are committed to human rights across race, diversity, and intersectionality, which means the right to be. Sexual orientation change efforts (SOCE), including conversion therapy, is diametrically opposed to this right as its goal is to change a part of another human being's very identity. We view conversion therapies as part of systemic oppression against the LGBTQ community," said Candida Brooks-Harrison, LCSW, President of the National Association of Social Workers – New York City (NASW-NYC) Chapter, stressing the need for statutory prohibition.

"Every person has the right to explore and discover their own sexual orientation and gender identity," said Ross McCabe, representing the New York State Society for Clinical Social Work. "It is a natural process of human development; being gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender is not an illness, disease, or short coming and should not be treated as such. So-called 'conversion therapy' perpetuates false and unscientific views to the public, particularly to our youth of needing treatment or a cure."

New York City joins a [growing number](#) of municipalities passing statutes to end the practice. In February 2016, [Governor Andrew M. Cuomo announced a series of regulations](#) to prohibit the coverage by both private and public health insurers from covering the practice of so-called ‘conversion therapy’ on minors, but New York has yet to enact an outright ban of the practice by providers in the state.

To date, six states, including California, Illinois, New Mexico, New Jersey, Oregon, Vermont, and Washington D.C., have enacted laws or regulations to protect minors from being subjected to conversion therapy by state-licensed mental health providers. In New York, there is continued push for passage of legislation that would prohibit mental health professionals from engaging in efforts to change a minor’s sexual orientation, gender expression, and/or gender identity. While the bill has passed the NY Assembly for several years in a row, it continues to face hurdles in the upper house.

Conversion therapy, also often known as ‘reparative therapy’, has never been proven effective by any scientific or empirical evidence. Every mainstream medical and mental health organizations have repudiated the efficacy of conversion therapy, citing the growing evidence of harm and long term detrimental consequences, including increased risk of depression, suicidal ideation, and substance abuse. But despite this, some practitioners continue to conduct conversion therapy.

The National Association of Social Workers – New York State and New York City Chapters and the New York State Society for Clinical Social Work will continue to urge the state legislature for a statewide ban practice of conversion therapy on minors. The aforementioned associations are committed to protecting the rights of the LGBTQ community and to preserve the dignity and diversity of all New Yorkers.

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About National Association of Social Workers – New York State Chapter

The National Association of Social Workers – New York State Chapter (NASW-NYS) is a membership organization of professional social workers, one of the largest chapters of NASW in the United States with over 7,500 members. NASW-NYS works to enhance the professional growth and development of its members, to create and maintain professional standards, and to advance sound social policies.

About National Association of Social Workers – New York City Chapter

The New York City Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW-NYC) is one of the largest chapters of NASW in the country. Founded in 1955, NASW-NYC represents professional social workers

who are working throughout the five boroughs, primarily in public and non-profit organizations. Social workers are also in private practice and in other for-profit service related settings.

About New York State Society for Clinical Social Work

New York State Society for Clinical Social Work (NYSSCSW) represents a community of highly trained clinicians committed to maintaining standards of professional education and practice in clinical social work psychotherapy in New York State.