



A JOINT STATEMENT FROM FAITH LEADERS BANNING CONVERSION THERAPY FOR MINORS IN ORANGE COUNTY

We are faith leaders seeking to serve the greater good and best interests of all Central Floridians. For this reason, we are urging our family, friends, and neighbors to save young LGBTQ+ lives by supporting a ban on conversion therapy for minors in Orange County.

Conversion therapy is rooted in the stigmatized belief that being LGBTQ+ is abnormal, broken, and something that needs to be fixed. It is intended to change the sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression of LGBTQ+ people. Conversion therapy is used by some licensed professionals under the guise of “health care” and clergy or spiritual advisors in the context of discipleship.

As faith leaders, many of us coming from faith traditions that have or still promote this harmful practice, we see conversion therapy for what it really is, spiritual, emotional, and sometimes physical abuse. Conversion therapy has been universally denounced by professional organizations including the [National Association of School Psychologists](#), the [American Psychoanalytic Association](#), the [American Psychiatric Association](#), the [National Association of Social Workers](#), the [American Counseling Association](#), and the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#).

Conversion therapy has no place in healthy communities. 18 states have banned the practice along with dozens of cities and counties across the country. Orange County, Florida has a long history of conversion therapy and there are still licensed mental health counselors here who are actively engaging in this harmful practice, inflicting damage to our youth. To truly be the inclusive community we aspire to be, we must ban this practice and put an end to inflicting trauma on youth who are simply being who they were born to be.

In our heart-breaking experience helping loved ones heal from the harmful effects of this practice, we have seen the abuse of conversion therapy wreak havoc on all fronts. Conversion therapy *damages* communities by spreading shame-based fear that undermines the common unity of what it means to be a truly civil and equality-minded community. Conversion therapy is *destructive* to families because it blame parents and children for “sin” or being “relationally broken.” Finally, and even more disturbingly, conversion therapy is *deadly*. We know this because it is killing our LGBT+ youth.

According to [The Trevor Project’s National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental health research](#), 42% of LGBT+ kids who experience conversion therapy attempt suicide. Tragically that already high number spikes even higher with 57% of transgender and non-binary youth who have undergone conversion therapy reporting a suicide attempt in the previous year. This abuse needs to end and banning conversion therapy for minors is a way to save lives.

It is time that we stop waiting until after abuse happens to help LGBTQ+ youth. We must protect our young people and provide the affirmation, love, and help they need to grow into the beautiful individuals they are meant to be. As a community, we need to take preventative action and ban conversion therapy for minors in Orange County. We will be saving young lives the moment we do while affirming that protecting LGBTQ+ youth is vital to a safe and inclusive community for all.



If you are a resident of Orange County, please email, mail, call or set up a time to meet with your Orange County Commissioner to encourage them to vote yes on banning conversion therapy for minors. To find and contact your County Commissioners, please visit:

<https://www.orangecountyfl.net/BoardofCommissioners.aspx>

Thank you for taking part in this life-saving effort to ban conversion therapy for minors in Orange County. It takes all of us to create the community we a to live in.

Signed By:

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Josh Bell, United Methodist Pastor

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Rev. Cynthia Alice Anderson (RCA), Senior Minister, Christ Church Unity Orlando

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Reverend Bryan Fulwider, *Friends Talking Faith with The Three Wise Guys* radio show

Dr. Paul W. Chilcote, Retired United Methodist pastor & seminary professor

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