

Briefing for Conversion Therapy Prohibition (Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity) Bill [House of Lords]

Baroness Burt of Solihull (Liberal Democrat) has tabled a private member's bill, the [Conversion Therapy Prohibition \(Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity\) Bill](#) in the House of Lords.¹ This bill will have its second reading this **Friday 9th of February 2024**. We urge members of the House of Lords to attend the debate and voice clear and unwavering opposition to its provisions and full implications.

There is 'no settled definition of "conversion therapy"'

The House of Lords Library briefing for the bill quotes the Parliamentary POST Note on the topic, which admits that there is 'no settled definition of "conversion therapy"'.² This means that the loose definition given in text of the current bill is wide open to being stretched in future.

Anybody in the United Kingdom could be criminalised

The wording of the bill makes clear that any person in the United Kingdom – not just any therapist – could be criminalised due to being deemed to have tried to change a person or group's sexual orientation or gender identity or suppress their expression thereof.

There is now widespread consensus that a law criminalising 'the practice of "conversion therapy"' will in fact end up criminalising all kinds of normal everyday behaviours. These include but may not be limited to the following:

- consensual private conversations about sexuality and gender issues; these could include conversations between parents and their own children or indeed any family and household members, therapists and their clients, clergy and members of their churches or other religious bodies; life coaches; facilitators and members of self-help groups; doctors or healthcare workers and their patients
- parents refusing to allow their children to cross-dress;
- all kinds of church activities including preaching, teaching, prayer, small groups, pastoral care;
- marriage and relationship counselling for individuals, couples and groups;
- advising someone to stay celibate until in a long-term relationship;
- conferences and educational events on issues around sexuality and gender.

Police assessment of consensual conversations involving therapists

The [House of Lords Library briefing on this bill](#) reproduces a text that Baroness Burt only provided directly to its researchers.³ Towards the end of this correspondence she says this:

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1. <https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3512>
 2. 'Conversion Therapy' POST Note, December 2021, p. 1, cited in the House of Lords Library briefing for the bill, p. 1 <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/POST-PN-0658/POST-PN-0658.pdf>; <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/LLN-2024-0004/LLN-2024-0004.pdf>
 3. <https://lordslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/lln-2024-0004/>

“Of course, it’s important to differentiate between psychological practice or religious advice and conversion therapy. A therapist, for example, who is exploring gender dysphoria with a young person in good faith—with no predetermined goal to change how that young person ought to be—shouldn’t be penalised. That’s why my bill would require the police to demonstrate both action and motivation when attempting to prosecute in relation to this offence.”⁴

The problem here is that this police involvement is nowhere mentioned on the face of the bill. It assumes that people would be reporting therapists – and anyone else deemed to be involved in ‘the practice of “conversion therapy”’ to the police for engaging in consensual private conversations with their own clients.

Introducing and endless trail of sexual and gender ‘identities’ into statute law

Baroness Burt also told the House of Lords Library that the bill intends to cover ‘all LGBT+ people’.

“I believe to be effective, the ban needs to be comprehensive, clear and inclusive of all LGBT+ [lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and other identities] people.”⁵

This significantly affects the meaning and interpretation of the text of the bill, which refers to ‘sexual orientation’ and ‘gender identity’. It allows for the future limitless addition of ‘other identities’ to the criminal law. In practice this will lead to unwarranted protection of all kinds of sexual and gender fantasies, fetishes and paraphilias – together with the criminalisation of anybody who resists their normalisation.

No evidence in favour of a “conversion therapy” ban bill

Sociologist Patricia Morgan has published a book showing that there is no evidence in favour of a new law banning “conversion therapy”, undermining extensive claims made by government-commissioned researchers in recent years.⁶ Copies of this book have been distributed to all MPs by Christian Concern.

This bill would constitute a major breach of the European Convention on Human Rights

International human rights law specialist Roger Kiska has published a legal opinion with the Christian Legal Centre, arguing that any conversion therapy ban law would breach human rights. Specifically it would fall foul of the European Convention on Human Rights.⁷

Vote down this totalitarian bill

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4. Page 2 of House of Lords Library briefing <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/LLN-2024-0004/LLN-2024-0004.pdf>
 5. Page 3 of House of Lords Library briefing <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/LLN-2024-0004/LLN-2024-0004.pdf>
 6. <https://www.wilberforcepublications.co.uk/banning-conversion-therapy>
 7. <https://christianconcern.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/CC-Resource-Briefings-Conversion-Therapy-Ban-Opinion-Roger-Kiska-220407.pdf>

Baroness Burt's bill is pointless and has totalitarian implications. It has received no parliamentary scrutiny. We urge members of the House of Lords to attend this Friday's second reading in order to speak against this bill and vote it down.