



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Gov. Wolf Signs Executive Order to Protect LGBTQIA+ Pennsylvanians from Conversion Therapy

Harrisburg, PA – Governor Tom Wolf signed Executive Order 2022-2 to protect Pennsylvanians from conversion therapy.

“Conversion therapy is a traumatic practice based on junk science that actively harms the people it supposedly seeks to treat,” said Gov. Wolf. “This discriminatory practice is widely rejected by medical and scientific professionals and has been proven to lead to worse mental health outcomes for LGBTQIA+ youth subjected to it. This is about keeping our children safe from bullying and extreme practices that harm them.”

The Executive Order directs commonwealth agencies to discourage conversion therapy in the commonwealth. It directs commonwealth agencies to take steps to actively promote evidence-based best practices for LGBTQIA+ individuals that is actually supported by the scientific and medical communities. It directs agencies to make updates to policies and procedures to better support LGBTQIA+ employees and the Pennsylvanians we serve. It also directs the Department of Human Services, the Insurance Department and Department of State and other appropriate agencies to explore and implement all options to ensure state funds, programs, contracts, and other resources are not used for the purposes of providing, authorizing, endorsing, reimbursing for, or referring for conversion therapy, to the extent permitted by law.

A [survey on LGBTQIA+ Youth Mental Health by The Trevor Project](#) shows that LGBTQIA+ youth are at increased risk for negative mental health outcomes. The survey results show that 45% of LGBTQIA+ youth seriously considered attempting suicide in the past year. 73% of LGBTQIA+ youth reported experiencing symptoms of anxiety. 58% reported symptoms of depression. Additionally, 36% of LGBTQIA+ youth reported they have been physically threatened or harmed due to their sexual orientation or gender identity.

According to a [peer-reviewed study from The Trevor Project](#), 13% of LGBTQIA+ youth nationwide reported being subjected to conversion therapy, and 83% of those subjected to it were under age 18.

The study showed that LGBTQIA+ youth who underwent conversion therapy were more than twice as likely to report having attempted suicide in the past year. Researchers found that when they accounted for the harms caused by conversion therapy – including negative mental health outcomes and substance use – conversion therapy costs our nation \$9.23 billion each year.

A [2019 study from the UCLA Williams Institute](#) estimated that 73,000 LGBTQIA+ youth will be subjected to conversion therapy before they turn 18 – including 16,000 youth who will receive conversion therapy from a licensed health care professional.

“Conversion therapy is causing horrific consequences for the mental health and well-being of a generation of young LGBTQIA+ individuals,” said Gov. Wolf. “But there is something very simple that we can all do to help. We can stand up and tell LGBTQIA+ youth that we hear them and we accept them exactly as they are.

“The Trevor Project’s Youth Mental Health Survey showed that rates of negative mental health outcomes among LGBTQIA+ youth are much lower in communities, schools and families that are accepting and supportive of LGBTQIA+ people. That’s why I signed this executive order to protect Pennsylvanians from conversion therapy and the damage it does to our communities. Because all of our youth deserve to grow up in a commonwealth that accepts and respects them.

“I want LGBTQIA+ youth and individuals across Pennsylvania to know that I stand with you. I see you, I respect you and I support you. My administration will continue to support policies to keep children safe from bullying and harmful practices.”

“We have worked tirelessly over the last year to collaboratively get this executive order drafted, through discussions with advocates, parents, and many stakeholders. With this action, the practice of conversion therapy has its days numbered in Pennsylvania,” said Rafael Alvarez Febo, executive director of the Pennsylvania Commission on LGBTQ Affairs. “Young people should never be punished for being who they are and that’s what so-called conversion therapy does, while causing sometimes irreparable trauma to individuals.”

“Taxpayers’ dollars must never again be spent on the dangerous and discredited practice of conversion ‘therapy’ — which has been consistently associated with [increased suicide risk](#) and an estimated [\\$9.23 billion economic burden in the U.S.](#),” said Troy Stevenson (he/him), senior campaign manager for Advocacy and Government Affairs of The Trevor Project. “Thank you Governor Tom Wolf for your leadership and for taking bold action to affirm and protect young LGBTQ people across the commonwealth. We urge the state legislature to pass comprehensive state-wide protections and for governors across the nation to follow the Keystone State’s lead in ending this abusive practice.”

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