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**Senator Tina Polsky and Representative Michael Grieco
Refile Legislation to Protect LGBTQ Youth from
Conversion Therapy**

Tallahassee, Fla. – Senator Tina Polsky (D-Boca Raton) and Representative Michael Grieco (D- Miami Beach) have filed [HB301](#) (Senate bill number pending) to prohibit practicing or performing conversion therapy on minors. Currently, under Florida law, conversion therapy is legal and recently the 11th U.S. Circuit Court upheld the practice as protected under free speech.

In the bill, conversion therapy is defined as any practice or treatment performed on an individual with the goal of changing their sexual orientation. Examples of this pseudo-scientific therapy can include shaming, or emotionally traumatic or physically painful stimuli, with the hope that the victim will associate those stimuli with their identities. Over 700,000 members of the LGBTQ community have been subjected to this practice with an expectation that 10s of thousands of LGBTQ youth will also fall victim.

Senator Polsky stated, “It is time for the state of Florida to stand up against this cruel and invalid practice which so many of our cities have had the good sense to ban. The state does not do nearly enough to protect our LGBTQ residents and this bill is an important step in the right direction. The mental health of our vulnerable youth should be our first concern and we need to ban these dangerous practices. Florida must stand up for our kids and against a widely disproven therapy which borders upon abuse, that is why this bill is needed.”

According to the American Psychological Association, there is a growing body of evidence that LGBTQ discrimination is a major source of stress. This scientifically invalid, disproven practice can lead to depression, anxiety, self-destructive behavior and fractured families, with studies showing that LGBTQ youth who are rejected by their families are more than 8 times more likely to attempt suicide. This year's version of the bill has been truncated to stay within the constitutional limitations addressed in the recent federal appellate decision.

Representative Grieco stated, "Although I disagree with the recent ruling allowing for professionals to continue to abuse children, LGBTQ Floridians still deserve to have their rights protected like every other person in this state. Not all abuse is physical. Conversion therapy is a dangerous, despicable and non-scientific practice that only harms people it is supposedly meant to 'help.' The idea that it is still legal to subject our youth to this aggressive and hurtful 'treatment' is unconscionable. Treating sexual orientation as a mental illness is demeaning and conversion therapy can lead to many unintended but harmful effects. This isn't the first time the bill has been carried by me and it's something near and dear to my heart. "

If passed, Florida would be one of 16 states to pass a ban on conversion therapy and practitioners in violation would be subject to disciplinary proceedings in this state.

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