

# **24 Former Conversion Therapy Leaders Unite in Opposition to Support Kentucky Ban**

Dear Esteemed Kentucky Legislators:

Conversion Therapy, also known as “reparative therapy”, “ex-gay therapy,” or “sexual orientation change efforts” (SOCE), professes to help lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people to change or overcome their sexual orientation or gender identity.

The majority of those who practice this “therapy” often do so with little or no formal psychological training. At one time, we were not only deeply involved in these conversion “therapy” programs -- we were the founders, the leaders, and the promoters.

Together, we represent more than half a century of experience, so few people are more knowledgeable about the ineffectiveness and harm of conversion therapy. We know first-hand the terrible emotional and spiritual damage it can cause, especially for LGBTQ youth.

We once believed that there was something morally wrong and psychologically “broken” about being LGBTQ. We know better now. We once believed that sexual orientation or gender identity were somehow chosen or could be changed. We know better now. We once thought it was impossible to embrace our sexual orientation or sexual identity as an intrinsic, healthy part of who we are and who we were created to be. We know better now.

Looking back, we were just believing (and sometimes teaching) what we had been taught—that our sexual orientation or gender identity needed mending. We grew up being told that being LGBTQ was disordered, sick, mentally ill, sinful, and displeasing to God. We grew up being told that loving, same-sex relationships were shallow, lust-driven, deceived, disordered, and impossible.

We grew up with the repetitive message that LGBTQ people were not enough — not straight enough, not Christian enough, not manly or womanly enough, not faithful enough, not praying enough. Never, ever enough. “Toxic” probably sums it up best. That message is poison to the soul. Especially a child’s soul. It can take a lifetime to get rid of that old programming and replace it with healthy, non-toxic views of yourself.

Recovery from conversion therapy is difficult at best. Some remain forever scarred, emotionally, and spiritually. Conversion therapy reinforces internalized homophobia, anxiety, guilt, and depression. It leads to self-loathing and emotional and psychological harm when change doesn't happen. Regrettably, too many will choose suicide as a result of their sense of failure.

In light of this, we now stand united in our conviction that conversion therapy is not "therapy," but is instead both ineffective and harmful. We align ourselves with every major mainstream professional medical and mental health organization in denouncing attempts to change sexual orientation or gender identity.

As former "ex-gay" leaders, having witnessed the incredible harm done to those who attempted to change their sexual orientation or gender identity, we join together in calling for Kentucky to ban conversion therapy. We can't take back the harm that we caused, but we want to prevent future damage. The bills proposed by Senator Alice Forgy Kerr and Representative Lisa Willner strike the right balance of protecting LGBTQ youth and individual freedom by appropriately regulating the conduct of licensed mental health professionals and protecting public funds from misuse. It is our firm belief that it is much more productive to support, counsel, and mentor LGBTQ individuals to embrace who they are in order to live happy, well-adjusted lives.

The Signers below are former practitioners, promoters, and leaders of conversion "therapy:"

**Alan Manning Chambers**

**Anthony Bishop**

**Bill Prickett**

Founder, Executive Director (1986-1988),  
Coming Back

**Bradford Allen Reubendale**

Lay Leader Volunteer (2005-2007)  
Church Network Coordinator (2007), Exodus  
International Headquarters

**Cat Chapman**

Project Coordinator (2000-2003)  
Women's Ministry Director (2005-2007),  
Portland Fellowship

**Darlene Bogle**

Founder, Director, Counselor (1985-1992),  
Paraklete Ministries

**David Foreman**

**David Matheson**

**Don Brown**

**Jeff Coe**

**Jeremy Marks**

Founder (1988 – 2000), Courage UK  
Exodus Europe (1988 – 1989)

**Jim Marjoram**

Worship leader and group leader (1997-2012),  
Living Waters (Australia, New Zealand)

**John J Smid**

Executive Director (1987-2008), Love In Action  
Exodus International Board of Directors  
(1990-1995, 2002-2008)

**John Paulk**

**Kim Brett**

Former Associate, Exodus International –  
Australia  
Former Leader, Living Waters and Liberty Inc  
Australia

**McKrae Game**

Founder & Executive Director (1999-2013),  
Truth Ministry; name changed, going national to  
Hope for Wholeness (2013-2017) – President

**Michael Bussee**

EXIT (1974-1979)  
Co-founder (1976-1979), Exodus International

**Paul Martin**

**Randy Thomas**

Executive Vice President (2002-2013), Exodus  
International  
Director (1997-2002), Living Hope Ministries

**Roy A. Blankenship**

**Tim Rymel**

Outreach Director (1991-1996), Love in Action

**Wendy VanderWal Gritter**

Exodus Regional Representative - Canada  
(2003-2007)

**Wenn Lawson**

Director (1990-1992), Exodus Melbourne,  
Australia

**Yvette Cantu Schneider**

Executive Director (2001-2005), Living in  
Victory Ministry  
Director of Women's Ministry (2008-2011),  
Exodus International