

Milwaukee Ald. Johnson: Conversion therapy banned by Common Council

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With a vote of 12-2, and one abstention, the Common Council today banned conversion therapy, the practice of attempting to change a person's sexual orientation.

Alderman Cavalier Johnson, sponsor of the legislation, says the ordinance applies only to minors and does not affect the faith-based community. He emphasizes the legislation prohibits fee-based conversion therapy services. He says if someone would like to seek free counseling from their faith leader, it remains possible under the legislation. This proposal also would not prohibit churches from preaching, ministering or otherwise speaking about the issue.

Outlined by the American Psychological Association's 2009 report, detrimental lifelong effects of conversion therapy include depression, suicidality, and substance abuse.

"As an elected official, it is my duty to be as vigilant as possible in preventing violence," said Ald. Johnson. "Conversion therapy often involves emotionally damaging or violent methods to victims that are most vulnerable, our children."

The resolution (Council file #171760) imposes a \$500 to \$1,000 fine for each violation, with each day practicing conversion therapy being considered a separate violation.

Alderman José G. Pérez, Alderman Tony Zielinski, Alderman Robert Bauman and Alderman Nik Kovac served as co-sponsors for the legislation.