

# New group launches to stop LGBTQ conversion therapy

WASHINGTON — A new grassroots group, 50 Bills 50 States, launched this week seeking to protect LGBT youth from the practice of conversion therapy. The discredited therapy seeks to change a person's sexual orientation or gender identity using what many consider torturous techniques.

Samuel Brinton, a survivor of conversion therapy and one of the group's founders, said, "Conversion therapy is a scam. It starts with the idea that being lesbian, bisexual, gay, transgender or queer is a mental illness. That's wrong. Our sexualities and gender identities are gifts that should be celebrated. Instead, these snake oil salesmen abuse children, attempting to change who they were born to be. They are born perfect and any therapist that says otherwise shouldn't be allowed anywhere near kids."

Young people in conversion therapy are subjected to shame, verbal abuse and even aversion techniques like electric shocks. There is overwhelming scientific evidence that these techniques are both ineffective and cause lasting damage. This has led the major mental health organizations to reject conversion therapy. The practice has already been banned in five states including California, New Jersey, Illinois, Oregon, Vermont, Washington, D.C and several cities and the group hopes to increase the number of areas across the country where LGBT youth will be protected.

"In the states and cities where the bans are already in place, we want to revive the conversations so that LGBTQ kids know they are beautiful and loved," Brinton said. "And in the other 45 states, we are going to work with legislators to introduce bills banning these brutal practices. We know every state won't pass these bills in 2017 but the unanimity of submitting them will resonate from coast to coast."

The group raised more than \$10,000 in its first week. "The outpouring of support has truly touched me," said Brinton. "Donations came from pastors. Donations came from porn stars. Donations came from nuclear scientists. Donations came from nurses. It was nothing short of astounding."

For more information, visit <https://50bills50states.org/>.