

GOP bill shielding conversion therapy clears committee on party line vote

BY LIAM NIEMEYER
Kentucky Lantern

Kentucky lawmakers would endanger vulnerable minors by approving a bill to protect conversion therapy, warned a coalition representing psychologists, social workers and the LGBTQ community during a committee hearing Thursday.

Rep. David Hale, R-Wellington, House Bill 495's primary sponsor, dismissed opponents' arguments, including personal testimony from speakers who told stories of experiencing abuse and harm from conversion therapy themselves.

Democratic Gov. Andy Beshear restricted the controversial practice last year through an executive order.

Hale told lawmakers on the House State Government Committee he wanted to protect counselors, therapists and pastors providing therapy to minors from discriminatory actions by the government, empowering parents to make choices on what kind of therapist a minor sees. The bill specifically protects mental health services seeking to relieve "discomfort or distress caused by an individual's sex or romantic or sexual attraction."

"The parents, in my opinion, have the right and the privilege of seeking whatever help they feel is best, necessary for that child," Hale told lawmakers.

Hale didn't specifically mention conversion therapy in his testimony. In a Lantern interview after the committee approved the bill 15-4 on party lines, Hale mentioned Democrat Beshear's executive order as a part of his reasoning for filing the bill. He said he worked with a couple of organizations to craft the bill's language but declined to name those organizations.

Calling it a "dangerous" practice," Beshear last year issued an executive order banning the use of state or federal funds to pay for conversion therapy and ordering licensure boards to consider disciplinary actions



Rep. David Hale listens to questions from lawmakers about HB 495. In an interview with the Lantern, Hale mentioned Gov. Andy Beshear's order restricting conversion therapy as part of his rationale for sponsoring the bill. (Kentucky Lantern photo)

against its practitioners. He was slammed by Republicans who said he was constitutionally overreaching and pushing a far-left agenda. Conversion therapy attempts to alter a young person's gender expression or sexual attractions.

The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP) is among the medical and psychological organizations that have condemned conversion therapy. AACAP has stated conversion therapies "lack scientific credibility and clinical utility" and there's "evidence that such interventions are harmful."

The American Psychological Association has stated people who have undergone "sexual orientation change efforts" are significantly more likely to be depressed and suicidal. The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is 988.

Eric Russ, the executive director of the Kentucky Psychological Association and a licensed clinical psychologist, said HB 495 "directly threatens the trust between a mental health provider and our clients" by protecting those who practice conversion therapy, something that is "widely discredited" and had no place in the mental health care of LGBTQ youth.

The Rev. Brandon Long, an ordained minister from Fort Thomas who spoke against the bill, recounted his experience as a survivor of conversion therapy. After he had shared with others that he was gay, he said he was told in secular and religious settings that his same sex attraction was caused by childhood trauma, poor parenting and "demonic influence."

"I do believe in forgiveness and repentance, but conversion therapy weaponizes these

sacred pastoral practices," Long said. "Because this is not pastoral care. It is spiritual and psychological abuse. Religious liberty is not absolute. It ends where harm begins. That's why we do not allow human sacrifice or child marriage in worship."

Brenda Rosen, the executive director of the Kentucky chapter of the National Association of Social Workers, urged lawmakers to work together to help minors with the mental health challenges they face through an approach based on "acceptance and support."

Chris Hartman, the executive director of the LGBTQ-rights group Fairness Campaign, questioned why HB 495 was being heard in a committee dealing with state government when he said the bill deals with mental health services.

"Few practices destroy families and hurt LGBTQ youth more

than what's considered conversion therapy, which is defined in a positive light in this bill," Hartman said.

The minority of Democrats on the committee strongly condemned the legislation and echoed the concerns of the opponents. Rep. Joshua Watkins, D-Louisville, mentioned his Christian faith in explaining his opposition, pointing to Bible scripture about loving oneself.

"I am an absolutely, firmly, resounding 'no' on this bill because to me, it breaches all of the things that my faith teaches me," Watkins said.

Some Republicans on the committee suggested the bill offers broad protection for counselors going beyond conversion therapy. Rep. Susan Witten, R-Louisville, argued the bill would also include protections for "mental health care professionals that would be pro-LGBTQ therapy, or gender-affirming care."

"I don't see anywhere in here where it would choose a type of therapy," said Rep. Jennifer Decker, R-Waddy. "I don't think it prohibits affirming care. It doesn't authorize conversion therapy."

Hale had said to lawmakers he believed the testimony from opponents was "not correct." When asked by the Lantern about opponents' personal testimony, Hale said he had found "no evidence" in his research to substantiate the types of personal testimony shared by opponents.

After the bill passed the committee on party lines, Hale got up from his seat to shake hands with some of the bill's opponents. Long refused to shake hands with Hale, telling him "you don't believe I exist."

"He's looking at us telling our stories, to then frame on the record that, 'I do not believe these individuals,'" Long said. "In other words, they are lying. And that is of the utmost disrespect for ourselves, for our lives, for our experiences coming and putting it forth on the record."

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Please take notice Prime Storage - Nicholasville Etter located at 251 Etter Dr. Nicholasville, KY 40356 intends to hold a public sale to sell the property stored in the following units stored at the Facility. The public sale will occur at an Online Auction via www.storage-treasures.com on 3/13/2025 at 12:00PM. Unit #148; Unit #237; Unit #238; Unit #517. This sale may be withdrawn at any time without notice. Certain terms and conditions may apply.

Jessamine Journal: Mar. 6, 2025 **L2L-56869**

PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE OF SELF STORAGE SALE

Please take notice Prime Storage - Nicholasville Industry located at 112 Industry Parkway Nicholasville, KY 40356 intends to hold a public sale to sell the property stored in the following units stored at the Facility. The public sale will occur at an Online Auction via www.storage-treasures.com on 3/13/2025 at 12:00PM. Unit #0337K; Unit #127; Unit #379. This sale may be withdrawn at any time without notice. Certain terms and conditions may apply.

Jessamine Journal: Mar. 6, 2025 **L2L-56870**

PUBLIC NOTICE

The Jessamine County-City of Wilmore Joint Board of Adjustment will meet in regular session at 7:00pm, Thursday, March 20, 2025 in the second-floor courtroom of the Jessamine County Courthouse located at 101 North Main Street, Nicholasville, Kentucky. The agenda will be as follows:

Old Business
Case #10026 - Application for a Dimensional Variance to reduce the required front yard setback submitted by John Carroll for property zoned A-1 and located at 1700 Logana Road, Jessa-

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mine County, Kentucky.
Case #10099 – Application for a Dimensional Variance to reduce the required minimum lot size from 5-acres to 0.77-acres, the required road frontage from 200' to 64', the required rear yard setback from 25' to 10' and the required right side yard setback from 25' to 5' submitted by Yevgeniya Nesenchuk for property zoned A-1 and located at 83 Dillingham Lane, Jessamine County, Kentucky.
Case #10104 – Application for a Conditional Use Permit to operate a Religious Center with space for prayer gathering, athletic and classroom facilities, and 216 parking spaces submitted by Vision Engineering on behalf of Bluegrass Educational and Social Services for property zoned A-1 and located at 6289 Harrodsburg Road, Jessamine County, Kentucky.

New Business
Case #10214 – Application for a Dimensional Variance to reduce the required 200' setback from the right-of-way of Harrodsburg Road (US 68) and the required minimum front yard setback from 50' to 38' submitted by Dr. Bilal Ahmad for property zoned R-1 and located at 101 Crosswoods Place, Jessamine County, Kentucky.
Case #10224 – Application for a Dimensional Variance to reduce the required minimum road frontage from 200' to 159.56' and approval of the parking lot associated with Conditional Use Permit #9415 submitted by Jeff Stutzman for property zoned A-1 and located at 1639 Logana Road, Jessamine County, Kentucky.

Jessamine Journal: Mar. 6, 2025 **MEETING 3.20.25**

PUBLIC NOTICE

1. ANNOUNCEMENT
A. The City of Nicholasville will receive Statements of Qualifications from qualified Construction Managers (CMs) for both Pre construction Phase services and Construction Phase services.
B. The intended Project is: Nicholasville Municipal Building. The project will include a 3 level, 32,000 sf municipal office building, drive through window, demolition of existing structures, and site work.
C. Interested and qualified CMs can receive a copy of the offi-

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cial Request for Qualifications (RFQ) by submitting a one-page letter of interest to:

Bob Amato
Finance Department
517 North Main Street
Nicholasville, KY 40356
(859) 885-1121

Bob.Amato@nicholasville.org
D. An authorized representative of the Owner will receive CM qualifications until March 20, 2025 at 1:00 PM (EST). **Qualifications received after this date will not be accepted.**

E. Qualifications shall be submitted only on the form as received from the soliciting City of Nicholasville.
F. Qualifications shall be enclosed in envelopes which clearly indicate a Statement of Qualification for Construction Management services.
G. Responding CMs will be required to meet all qualifications set out in the RFQ which include the following:
1. CM Experience
2. Payment and Performance Bonds
3. Professional Liability Insurance
4. Ability to Provide Experienced Office and Field Staff

H. Questions concerning Request for Qualifications or the project should be addressed to: Bob Amato
Finance Department
517 North Main Street
Nicholasville, KY 40356
(859) 885-1121
Bob.Amato@nicholasville.org
I. This Request for Qualifications is subject to all applicable local, state and federal regulations prohibition against conflict of interest, and gratuities and kickbacks.

Jessamine Journal: Mar. 6, 2025 **RFQ/BUILDING**

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