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### **Republicans Bring Back “Conversion Therapy” Child Abuse by Counselors and Therapists**

MADISON – Today, Republicans voted to suspend a rule preventing state-licensed counselors and therapists from subjecting youth to so-called “conversion therapy,” a discredited and abusive practice that purports to change a person’s sexual orientation or gender identity.

**Sen. Kelda Roys:** *“‘Conversion therapy’ is child abuse and has no place in Wisconsin. This discriminatory, harmful practice should be banned to protect every child. As Republican legislative leaders have called for good faith efforts to work with Gov. Evers and Democrats, it’s disappointing that one of their first official actions is to use vulnerable children as pawns in their right-wing culture war.*

*“Actions like this send a clear message to LGBTQ children and families that they aren’t welcome in Wisconsin. It contributes to the outflow of young professionals and working families leaving the state to live in more inclusive places. Worst of all, conversion therapy causes concrete harm to vulnerable young people – including increased risk of depression, drug use, homelessness, and suicide.”*

**Rep. Sue Conley:** “Today’s vote by Republicans is deeply disappointing and disturbing. ‘Conversion therapy’ has no basis in science and is adamantly opposed by professionals in the counseling field. This practice has been proven to put youth at risk of psychological harm. Allowing conversion therapy in Wisconsin reverses the decision made by professional social workers and experts to ban the practice in their profession. Politicians have no business interfering in the work of mental health experts, especially when it involves our children.”

**Rep. Samba Baldeh:** “With their votes today, our Republican colleagues decided to fly in the face of science, long-standing professional guidelines and understanding, and even simple human compassion. ‘Conversion therapy’ has been discredited over and over again by healthcare and counseling professionals across the country and the world, and allowing this practice to continue in our state does nothing but put our LGBTQIA+ communities in harm’s way and take our communities backward.”

**Sen. Chris Larson:** “My Republican colleagues have developed an unusual and disturbing obsession with the bodies and identities of children and adolescents, and re-instituting conversion torture is just the latest example. Whether it’s dead-naming kids, forcing intrusive medical examinations to determine biological sex before they can play sports, or even trying to forbid discussions of gender and sexuality in school altogether, what they’re trying to do is nothing less than state-sponsored child abuse.”