

LGBT+: Hong Kong lawmakers reject gay civil unions in 27-24 vote

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Lawmakers in Hong Kong have narrowly rejected a push towards recognition of LGBT+ rights regarding gay civil unions.

Raymond Chan, Hong Kong's first openly gay lawmaker, put a bill before the autonomous region's legislative council that would have opened the door to permitting recognition of same-sex partnerships with gay civil unions.

Although attitudes towards homosexuality are more progressive in Hong Kong than in mainland China, the region has no process for legal recognition of same-sex relationships, and gay couples have limited rights in the region.

Chan, of the People Power party, submitted a bill seeking a "small step" towards recognition of same-sex unions and LGBT+ rights

But the bill, which contained few concrete provisions, was rejected in a 27-24 vote in the city legislature.

According to the *South China Morning Post* [1], the pro-Beijing lawmakers who hold control in the Legislative Council largely voted against the measure.

Holden Chow of the pro-Beijing Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong warned that society would suffer if it bowed to "Western traditions," while Priscilla Leung of the Business and Professionals Alliance for Hong Kong claimed bolstering gay rights would undermine "social and family stability."

Hong Kong's new visa rules recognise gay civil unions

The vote comes less than a week after Hong Kong's LGBT+ community took to the streets for the city's annual Pride parade [2].

Thousands of people attended the parade on Saturday (November 17), with attendees calling for better rights protections.

In July, Hong Kong's Court of Final Appeal ruled that same-sex couples who have entered unions elsewhere must have their relationships recognised as part of the spousal visa application process, following a high-profile challenge from a lesbian couple [3].

A revised government policy that went into effect in September in the wake of the ruling allows the recognition of same-sex unions for visa applications, but no other element of law.

Public support LGBT+ rights in Hong Kong

The lack of visible progress on LGBT+ rights comes despite public opinion.

A 2017 University of Hong Kong study found that more than half of people in Hong Kong support same-sex marriage [4], putting public opinion in the region in conflict with views in mainland China, where more conservative beliefs persist.

However, there are also anti-LGBT voices in Hong Kong.

Dominic Lee, a conservative Liberal Party councillor and spokesperson for the group Ban Gay Marriage HK, claimed in July that people in the United States and United Kingdom are becoming gay because of the introduction of same-sex marriage [5].

Speaking at a forum on LGBT rights, the politician warned that recognising same-sex unions in Hong Kong would open a Pandora's Box.

According to the *Hong Kong Free Press* [6], Lee warned: "The top 10 states with greatest proportion of [people who are] LGBTQ are also states where same-sex marriage was legal for the longest.

"In the UK, some places after they legalised same-sex marriage, there is an increase in number of people who say they are LGBTQ."

He added: "If [the courts] recognise the status of same-sex couples, that will grant them rights in Hong Kong such as the right to education. That coerces the government, as well as taxpayers who don't accept same-sex marriage, to recognise their relationship.

"It expanded the definition of spouse - from spouses of opposite sex to spouses of the same sex."

Nick Duffy

P.S.

• PinkNews Daily LGBT+ Newsletter. 22nd November 2018, 4:39 PM :
<https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2018/11/22/hong-kong-rejects-gay-civil-unions-vote/>

Footnotes

[1] <https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/society/article/2174544/small-step-push-civil-unions-gay-couples-shot-down-hong-kong>

[2] <https://www.hongkongfp.com/2018/11/18/pictures-call-law-equality-hong-kong-pride-attendees-demand-greater-lgbt-legal-protection/>

[3] <https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2018/07/04/british-lesbian-wins-right-to-live-and-work-with-her-wife-in-hong-kong/>

[4] <https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2018/07/03/more-than-half-of-hong-kong-supports-equal-marriage-says-report/>

[5] <https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2018/07/10/hong-kong-gay-marriage-makes-you-gay/>

[6] <https://www.hongkongfp.com/2018/07/10/anti-gay-politician-dominic-lee-falsely-claims-sex-marriage-encourages-lgbtq-lifestyles/>