

I support the laudable aim of the writers of Bill C-6 to protect the dignity and human rights of individuals who may be pressured or coerced to undergo conversation therapy, which I understand to be degrading, nominally “therapeutic” attempts to radically alter aspects of a person’s sexuality. However, I am deeply concerned that the description of conversion therapy in Bill C-6 is far too vague and non-specific, and as such remains open to harmful misinterpretation.

For example, it is crucial that parents, teachers, and health care professionals are empowered to have frank and truthful discussions surrounding sexual behaviour. I am concerned that the definition of conversion therapy in Bill C-6, which includes a prohibition against “reducing” or “repressing” sexual behaviour, could be twisted to inhibit very important discussions concerning safe sex and sexually transmitted infections. If Bill C-6 makes parents or professionals even slightly wary about sharing key health information, then this bill may do harm rather than good to the vulnerable individuals it intends to protect.

Furthermore, this bill’s vague reference to “repressing” or “reducing” sexual behaviour could conceivably be used against parents or religious leaders who, without attempting to change anyone’s sexual orientation, engage in teaching cultural or religious beliefs surrounding sexual behaviour. Canada includes - and even celebrates- a rich variety of cultural and religious groups. It should be possible to encourage and maintain this diversity by allowing full freedom of speech, and at the same time to ensure that no individual, of any gender or sexual orientation, is forced to participate in any of these groups (or accept their teaching) against their will. Adjusting the wording of Bill C-6 would be a step towards such a balance.

My concerns, as well as some other relevant points, are stated in the petition that has been brought forward by Garnett Genuis, MP (see <https://fixthedefinition.ca>). I join him in urging you to revise this well-intentioned but deeply imperfect section of Bill C-6.