

To the Justice Committee of the Government of Canada

Please see the following brief on my thoughts concerning Bill C-6 and how I hope you will reconsider amending the definition of what it means to ban conversion therapy.

To the Right and Honourable Arif Virani, Mike Kelloway, James Maloney, Sameer Zuberi, Ramish Sangha, and Iqra Khalid:

It is my simple request to ask you to reconsider the definition of what it means to ban conversion therapy in our country. I am fully in favour of banning coercive, degrading practices that are designed to change a person's sexual orientation or gender identity. This kind of manipulation does not care for a person's mind, body, soul, or spirit. I realize that many people have been hurt by this kind of pressure and manipulation and I want to see it stopped. I agree that this should not be forced on someone who does not want it.

On the other hand, I believe it is the right of a citizen to receive the care they desire as well as for people to live by their set of beliefs. The current amendment of Bill C-6 would discriminate against Canadians from the LGBTQ2 community by limiting what services they can receive based on their sexual orientation or gender identity. A person should be able to receive the counseling they wish to receive. For example, if a person wants to receive counseling on living a bisexual lifestyle, they should be able to receive it. Similarly, another person may not want to fully embrace a bisexual lifestyle and want to receive counseling in a way that does not force or encourage them to be one way or the other.

Secondly, I believe caregivers should be free to speak with their children about sexuality and gender. Caregivers should be equipped to have open conversations that promote the health and well-being of their children. They should also be able to set their own house rules concerning all affairs based on each household's beliefs and values. This includes sexuality and relationships. For example, the household I currently live with has a value to not consume too much alcohol. Many people in our country have been harmed by the consumption of alcohol either personally or as a secondary recipient through their family of origin. Therefore, our household values limiting our alcohol consumption to avoid traumatizing or disrespecting others' experiences. Similarly, parents should be able to set up ground rules that helps the child grow to be an adult who embraces and cares for those around them in a way that honours their beliefs, values, and desires. In this way, the child knows that they are respected and can bring up their personal quandaries to their parents knowing they will be valued regardless of the topic.

Thirdly, I believe that these free and open conversations about sexuality and sexual behaviour should be able to happen everywhere. This does not condone hate speech and being judgmental towards others of differing opinions. Rather, it provides the opportunity to grow in listening and caring for people of all values and beliefs. This listening would mean that neither side—whatever those sides are—are trying to gain a member, but rather are respectful and learning how to help each person's desires be met in a way that is honouring to that person.

Therefore, I urge you—the Justice Committee—to reconsider changing the definition of conversion therapy so that these free and open conversations can keep—or start—happening. A new definition would not criminalize professional and religious counseling that is *voluntarily* requested and consented to by Canadians who are part of the LGBTQ2 community. In addition, it would not criminalize parents, friends, or neighbours for living by their values and beliefs and making those values a part of their household's structure. Finally, please know that, like you, I wish to see a shift from harmful, judgmental, and manipulative conversations of all kinds. This shift would be to listen to voices from *all* kinds of values and beliefs openly and freely in order that we might find unity among the many differences our country's mosaic has to offer and therefore honour each other with the respect every human deserves.

Thank you for your time and I hope you consider these requests.