



November 25, 2020

Members
Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights
House of Commons
Ottawa ON K1A 0A6

Dear Members:

Re. Bill C-6

Dignity Canada Dignité is an organization for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) Catholics that was formed in 1981. We have recently become aware of the submission to your committee by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCCB) in October. Catholic Bishops, however, should not be seen as reflecting the views of the majority of Canadian Catholics on this and many other matters concerning human sexuality. Overall, we are very pleased with Bill C-6 as it seeks to bring to an end harmful practices often carried out or financially supported by some religious organizations to change a person's sexual orientation. The following are a few additional comments to assist in your review of Bill C-6:

1. As found by medical and social science research, conversion therapy¹ to change a person's sexual orientation or gender identify is useless at best, harmful at worst. For example, a large American program called "Exodus International," which operated for over 30 years, was discontinued seven years ago after its proponents acknowledged the great harm that it had created. (See [here](#).)
2. A major disagreement we have with Bill C-6 is that conversion therapy will still be available to LGBTQ persons 18 years of age and older, provided it is not against a person's will, not advertised, and provides no financial or other material benefit to the "therapist." Our position is that it remains harmful for victims of any age and should not be provided to anyone.
3. Conversion therapy is contrary to modern understandings of human sexuality. While the Catholic hierarchy in North America has generally accepted that sexual orientation is inborne and not subject to change, it is incredibly misinformed about same-gender relationships, gender identity, gender expression and gender transition. It has created a straw dog called "gender ideology" which no one else understands or accepts. As is the case with sexual orientation,

¹ Our first choice would be to insert quotes every time around the word "therapy," because it is not a recognized form of therapy by professional associations of psychiatrists, psychologists and social workers.

science has discovered that gender identify is an inborne quality that a person discovers, not a problem to be solved.

4. Bill C-6 clearly does not criminalize private beliefs or conversation, however erroneous they may be.
5. With respect to the CCCB's concern about religious freedom and beliefs, we do not support having conversion therapies available as a choice, because these practices, treatments or services have been found not to work and, in many instances, to be very harmful emotionally, mentally and spiritually. Clergy are given "carte blanche" by families and individuals to deal with an unlimited range of issues for which they have little or no training. This has resulted in devastating consequences for individuals (child abuse being the best documented at this point), and they have no published code of professional ethics for clergy.
6. The definition of conversion therapy (section 320.101) has two exclusions for greater clarity. We are concerned that their vagueness could easily be used by personnel to actually carry out the practices, treatments or services which Bill C-6 is intended to end. As an alternative, we propose that the sentence be changed to:

"For greater certainty, this definition does not include a practice, treatment or service that:

- (a) is an integral component to a person's gender transition; or
- (b) counsels someone who has questions about their gender identity or sexual orientation, with the goal of greater understanding and acceptance of themselves; or
- (c) is intended to help a person who has an addiction to sexual behaviour; and
- (d) is LGBTQ-affirming in every respect, recognizing the dignity and rights of LGBTQ persons; the equivalent worth of same-gender and opposite-gender relationships including marriage; the equivalent worth of transgender and cisgender identities; the goodness of transgender and non-binary forms of gender expression; and the importance to transgender individuals, families and Canadian society of transgender access to appropriate medical care including hormones and gender-affirming surgeries."

7. We understand that some families, perhaps new Canadians from different cultures, may genuinely want to change the sexual orientation or gender identity of their LGBTQ child. Rather than giving them false hope and severely damaging their child's self-image and confidence, we urge all levels of government to support educational programs and campaigns which communicate the findings of contemporary medicine and social sciences that sexual orientation and gender identity are attributes we discover in ourselves. As a faith community, Dignity Canada Dignité would add the adjective "God-given" attributes.

I trust that these remarks will assist in your review of Bill C-6 and I invite you to contact me if you would like any clarification.

Yours truly,

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