



**Submission by
UFCW Canada to the
Standing Committee on Justice
and Human Rights regarding
*Bill C-6: An Act to amend
the Criminal Code
(Conversion Therapy)***

SUBMISSION BY UFCW CANADA TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS REGARDING *BILL C-6: AN ACT TO AMEND THE CRIMINAL CODE (CONVERSION THERAPY)*

On behalf of the members of the United Food and Commercial Workers Union Canada (UFCW Canada), we are pleased to provide this submission to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights regarding *Bill C-6: An Act to amend the Criminal Code (Conversion Therapy)*.

As the leading private sector union in Canada, we represent over a quarter-of-a million union members working across the country in over 28 sectors of the economy. In upholding non-discrimination protections, and in negotiating for workplace protections through the collective bargaining process, we stand in solidarity with union members who are working to eliminate the stigma, the prejudice, and the discrimination faced by LGBTQI2S persons in Canada.

While Bill C-6 is new, the practice of so-called “conversion therapy” is not. Sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression change efforts (SOGIECE) are unscientific, unethical, and unsupported by medical associations and often carry an impact that is irrevocable for survivors of this discriminatory practice. In principle, we support Bill C-6 and the proposed amendments to the Criminal Code of Canada. Furthermore, we urge the federal government to seize the opportunity to be a global leader in eliminating conversion therapy practices in all aspects of society. Of note, a 2019 opinion poll found that three in five Canadians oppose conversion therapy. For this Bill to lead to a complete ban on the practice of conversion therapy in Canada, the legislation must be comprehensive and must include and protect ALL persons; regardless of age, gender identity, or any other human rights ground. Because of the clear evidence of harm, it is imperative that Bill C-6 be amended to include explicit protections for ALL adults from this coercive, fraudulent, and abusive practice.

Bill C-6 must also clearly ensure that strong sanctions are in place, punishable by law, for any person, organization, or institution found to be overtly or covertly practicing or promoting conversion therapy and/or associated change efforts. According to 2016 statistics from the Canadian Human Rights Commission, 69 per cent of all the discrimination complaints it received that year were related to sexual orientation. Without including a comprehensive ban to conversion therapy, persons at risk of being subjected to these change practices may not be protected by law.

We take this opportunity to urge the federal government to amend Bill C-6 to clearly and explicitly include the revocation of the charitable status of any organization or association found to practice or promote sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression change efforts in any capacity. This should occur with any finding of recommendations – verbal or in writing – towards change efforts by persons with affiliated ministries in churches or any religious institutions and/or

persons in authority who represent religious organizations or groups which allow this to occur. This includes counselling services in society and volunteer programming. Honouring diversity of thought, expression, and inclusion efforts should never come at a cost of denying an individual's Charter rights, our democratic values as a nation, and our ability to protect the fundamental freedom to exist just as we are in society.

Support for this is noted with the October 26-27, 2020 presentation of the 2nd reading and debate of Bill C-6, when 308 MPs voted in favour of banning conversion therapy in Canada.

Lastly, the impact of conversion therapy practices on LGBTQI2A peoples has been highlighted in research which outlines the grave negative impacts that conversion therapy can have on survivors and the LGBTQI2A community (See Wells, 2020). Federal legislation must also strongly encourage complementary conversion therapy bans across all provinces, territories, and municipalities. This is also Recommendation #21 of the [2019 Report of the Standing Committee on The Health of LGBTQI2A Communities in Canada](#). Furthermore, the process for moving forward must support the voices and lived experiences of conversion therapy survivors and provide the necessary education and funding to ensure survivors are afforded opportunities to repair the impacts of this abhorrent human rights violation.

In closing, we believe that Canada has the potential to lead a global example of inclusivity with the previously noted amendments to this important Bill. In your power rests a matter that has the potential to be life-changing for the thousands of persons who remain persecuted in Canada for their gender identity, gender expression, and/or sexual orientation.

Respectfully submitted by:

UFCW Canada

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