

Dear Honourable Members of the Justice Committee,

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of Bill C-6.

As a youth I received what would be called “conversion therapy” under Bill C-6. When I was younger I was involved in lesbian activity for a number of years. I started hating myself and my female gender and was struggling with depression. In my heart, with no one else’s input, there arose a deep sense that I did not want to continue as a lesbian for the rest of my life. At one point, I decided to pursue relationships only with men. I told my parents, who supported my choice, and helped connect me with a counselor. The counselor was able to talk with me and help me process the self-hatred I was experiencing, and also supported me in the decision I had made to no longer engage in lesbian activity. Because of the counseling, I had a deep sense of love, acceptance and self-esteem for my decision.

It was not harmful, coercive, or abusive in any way. I simply poured out my heart to the counselor about what I was feeling and how I wanted to live differently, and my counselor encouraged me and supported me in what I was choosing to do. This Bill criminalizes **exactly** that, because I myself was choosing to “reduce my non-heterosexual . . . sexual behaviour”, and seeking support of a counselor for that. Under Bill C-6, any advertising of this kind of service is criminalized, and it therefore would prevent me from even knowing that I could find supportive counseling, as any counselor would be terrified by imprisonment and a criminal record from helping a struggling youth like me. The Bill only has an exemption for exploring “a person's identity or its development”. **I was not exploring;** even though I was a youth, I was absolutely firm in what I wanted my sexual preference to be, and I found a counsellor to support me. This Bill would send that counselor to jail.

You need more **specific exemptions and clarifications** in this Bill.

We have been taught to equate Conversion Therapy with electric shocking, but what this Bill actually criminalizes is vastly more than harmful practices. I submit to you, the Justice Committee, that what is important and what passes the test of time is the **actual wording** of the bill, not any intent. Recently, someone told me about the website of fixthedefinition.ca, and much of what I feel is supported by that website.

I have been publicly shamed for sharing my story and speaking out against this legislation. Please, do not allow my voice to be silenced, and understand that this wording threatens the choices of people like me.

I recognize that harmful and abusive practices have been used in “conversion therapy”. But by redefining “conversion therapy” under the Bill, it does not undermine the dignity of LGBTQ2S+ individuals. As a youth under 18, I was able to choose my counselor, and I believe youth across the country should have the dignity of that same decision and know that they can receive support in “reducing non-heterosexual . . . sexual behaviour” if they so desire for whatever reason.

If you enact the proposed conversion therapy Bill, you are banning the exact support that I desperately needed at that time in my life. If this Bill is to be truly inclusive for Canadians, include people like me.

Sincerely yours in love,

Chantelle