

Briefing of Bill C-6

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IN SHORT; If Conversion Therapy is left allowed to operate for transgender people we will see a larger net harm.

Bill C-6 as presented currently proposes the ban of conversion therapy in Canada. At this point it seems that it is almost universal consensus that conversion therapy should be banned for gay and lesbian people, however the contentious part comes when people of diverse gender identity are included in this bill. I would like to make the case for keeping gender identity in this bill, and protecting some of the most vulnerable people in our society: transgender youth.

Conversion Therapy

It is long since known that conversion therapy is not effective. Numerous studies have been conducted on the matter, with little to no evidence suggesting that one's sexual orientation or gender identity can be successfully changed without psychological, or physical damage. In some instances it is downright inhumane.

One such study "Mormon Clients' Experiences of Conversion Therapy"[1] from the university of Utah conducted a survey of 202 conversion therapy participants. Out of the 202 people (20 women, 182 men), "176 perceived themselves as conversion therapy failures and 26 as therapy successes." [1] This is a 87.1% failure rate. To say that is an unacceptable number would be a complete understatement. Along with this,

the study then proceeds to cover the mental struggles many participants faced after the process.

“Participants in the study described many harms from conversion therapy, including increased depression, suicidality, and internalized homophobia; decreased self-esteem; increased distorted perceptions of homosexuality; increased intrusive imagery and sexual dys-function; increased monitoring of gender-deviant mannerisms; increased negative feelings toward family of origin; increased alienation, loneliness, and social isolation; interference with intimate relationships; loss of social supports; fear of being a child abuser; delay of developmental tasks; and loss of faith.” [1]

Whilst I do hold reservations regarding this study, and do not agree with its ultimate conclusion in finding an alternative conversion therapy (I think it should be banned outright), the data it provides is valuable, and as such it will be presented here.

Conversion therapy is unreliable and absolutely should be banned. It is abuse, especially to children who are disproportionately put into this therapy. [2]

In Relation to Gender Identity

We have now seen the harms of conversion therapy, and why it should absolutely be banned. So the next question is: If we know conversion therapy is bad, why are we having a conversation about whether transgender conversion therapy should be excluded from this ban?

The main argument brought forward is the supposed protection of children, which on the surface is a compelling argument, but as you dig deeper unravels.

The argument seems to be that gender identity should be excluded as to give parents more rights to have persuasion over their children to not transition. This seems to ignore the fact that parents already have a large amount of control over a child's transition until they reach the age of majority. Parental permission is needed already to obtain HRT (Hormone Replacement Therapy) as a minor, and only in some cases, with a lot of effort, is it possible to bypass this hurdle.

HRT cannot even be started until 16 years of age^[3], after which extensive testing has concluded to ensure that an individual knows the decision they are undertaking, and the consequences that it will entail. (Informed Consent). The number of cisgender teenagers who go through this process mistakenly is negligible, and does not serve to invalidate the legitimate experiences of many transgender youth.

The further argument is that the few cisgender teenagers who do mistakenly go through HRT are experiencing an abstract form of child abuse. The obvious counter to this is that the alternative that opponents to this bill would like to keep legal is actual tangible child abuse. Conversion therapy disproportionately affects children and teens^[2], who are sent to conversion centres against their will. To keep conversion therapy an available option would subject more children to actual child abuse than the demonstrably few cisgender teenagers, who have the option to detransition, which is publicly accessible via the same services to transition.

My plea is to *Keep the bill as is*. If you want to stop child abuse, you should stop conversion therapy.

Citation:

[1]

https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Lee_Beckstead/publication/258191843_Mormon_Clients%27_Experiences_of_Conversion_Therapy_The_Need_for_a_New_Treatment_Approach/links/570a742e08ae8883a1fbdfd7/Mormon-Clients-Experiences-of-Conversion-Therapy-The-Need-for-a-New-Treatment-Approach.pdf

[2]

<https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/conversion-therapy-and-lgbt-youth/>

[3] <http://www.phsa.ca/transcarebc/hormones/hormone-therapy>

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