

Dear Members of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights:

Bill C-6, “An Act to amend the Criminal Code (conversion therapy)”, offers an important opportunity to reflect on conversion therapy practices that continue to adversely affect transgender, non-binary, Two-Spirit, queer, bisexual, lesbian, gay, and other gender and sexual diverse Canadians. We are heartened that the federal government is committed to addressing these traumatic practices; however, we are obliged to express our concerns about ways in which Bill C-6 fails to adequately define and prevent all forms of conversion therapy. We are particularly concerned about the inequitable impact the current version of the bill will have on trans, non-binary, and gender-diverse Canadians (hereafter, we use the term trans as meaning to include non-binary and other gender-diverse people).

I am a trans person, and making it to adulthood and accessing gender-affirming medical care took an incredible strength of will. Along the line, I have lost many trans friends and community member to suicide. It is so difficult to be trans in a world that does not want us. Conversion therapy is abuse. Trans people, trans lives, are precious and worthy of protection. There is nothing wrong with transition. My life as an adult trans person is full of love and joy and community, and I want that for all of my trans peers and those who will come up behind us.

In its current form, Bill C-6 narrowly defines conversion therapy, excluding practitioners who insist that they are not intending to “change a person’s... gender identity” but whose goal is nevertheless to discourage or delay the adoption of gender identities not assigned at birth, as well as non-conforming gender expressions. We specifically call for amendments (Appendix) to sections 320.101 (“definition of conversion therapy”), 320.101 (a) and (b) (“exclusions”), and 320.102 (2) (“forced conversion therapy”), in order to: include conversion therapy targeting gender expression; more clearly define conversion therapy as including practices that regard a gender identity not assigned at birth as disordered or less desirable; and assert that consent is not valid, if risks associated with conversion therapy are not clearly explained to the patient. We urgently request that you reevaluate this bill and communicate how the federal government will address conversion therapy practices that trans Canadians experience. In addition, we ask the government to communicate other proactive strategies that will be used—beyond legislative changes to the Criminal Code—to ensure equitable access to trans-affirming information and supports for trans people of all ages (including youth), as well as their families, communities, and service and support workers, across the country.

Please visit a set of recommendations in the Appendix of this page: <http://cgshe.ca/open-letter-bill-c-8-excludes-conversion-therapy-practices-that-target-trans-people/>