

Wednesday December 2, 2020

Bill C-6 – Act to amend the Criminal code (Conversion therapy)

Dear members of the Standing Committee for Justice and Human Rights

Thank you for representing our communities and ridings across Canada.

Regarding Bill C-6, I do not support involuntary or coercive efforts to change a person's sexual orientation or gender identity. Many people who have experienced conversion therapy describe despair and suicidal ideation as a consequence. However, I am very concerned that this bill will do far more than ban such efforts.

The definition of conversion therapy in Bill C-6 is so broadly worded that it bans efforts to reduce sexual behaviour and I'm very concerned that it could criminalize religious instruction and expression of religious beliefs around sexuality. Canadians must remain free to voluntarily seek out support to live in a way that is consistent with their beliefs, faith identity and personal convictions. Religious institutions must be able to offer support to those who seek it, as well as provide religious instruction.

I would like to see changes to Bill C-6 so that the bill, at a minimum, clearly exempts religious instruction, parental guidance and the development of religious identity. Also, the words "to repress or reduce sexual attraction or behaviour" or words like these, must be removed from the definition of 'conversion therapy.'

Without these changes, I believe Bill C-6 poses a serious threat to freedom of expression and the ability to live according to one's religious identity and personal convictions.

Sincerely,

Rick Verkerk