

Mom, Nurse, Clinical Educator for Trans and Non-Binary Health

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

“The notion that there are two and only two genders, is one of the most basic ideas in our binary Western way of thinking. Transgender people challenge our very understanding of the world. And we make them pay the cost of our confusion by their suffering” Lawyer Barbara Findlay, [Ontario Human Rights Commission Policy Preventing Discrimination Because of Gender Identity and Gender Expression p.8](#)

My youngest of 4 children is a trans feminine young adult who came out 9 years ago when she was 15. As a Registered Nurse with a master’s degree in nursing science, I had learned nothing of how to guide or support my trans child. So, I began to search for evidence.

I met with endocrinologists, primary care providers and mental health providers. I asked them about their experience with trans patients and I asked them for evidence, which they provided and which I read ... and read. I went to talks and workshops, was an original member of the local ‘parents of trans kids’ group and attended the 2017 Canadian Professional Association for Transgender Health Conference. I met with members of the trans community, some of whom were social service, health and spiritual care professionals and I asked them for evidence, which they provided.

The evidence is clear; Gender Diversity is neither ‘new’ nor ‘ill defined’ (as some submitted briefs would have you believe), rather, gender has been diverse since time immemorial; unfortunately the culture in which I was raised, did not share this truth. The evidence is also clear that what people need, what my daughter needed, was a safe space to explore her unique identity and to determine her needs and goals; we ensured only that she was given that space. She was neither pushed nor pressured by healthcare providers, I have never seen a more thorough process of informed consent. The health system was then and is now, more inclined to slow medical transition down than to hurry it along.

Despite claims that Bill C-6 will have a chilling effect on services for gender diverse children, it is my firm belief that legitimate, evidence-based providers caring for trans and gender diverse youth need not worry; there is no verified evidence to the contrary. For example, the quality and availability of services in Ontario has not diminished in the more than 5 years since passing legislation that banned conversion therapy in June 2015.

Passing Bill C-6 will not remove the space for parents, faith leaders or health professionals to engage people in respectful, open conversations about gender identity. Nor will passing Bill C-6 remove the place of *Gender Journeys* groups across the country supporting people of all ages to safely explore their identities at their own pace in evidence-based forums. Rather, Bill C-6 is intended to prevent parents, faith leaders and health professionals from taking autonomy away from the people they support. No one can know the identity of another; only people themselves can know who they are, and they will come to that knowledge each in their own way and time. I am grateful my daughter did not experience Conversion Therapy, I am grateful she is now living authentically and that she had the space and support to make evidence based decisions, although the pace set by the healthcare system was much slower than she wanted and those delays harmed her mental health.

I am concerned by the briefs proposing that listening and responding to children and youth with diverse identities and expressions is a ‘form of conversion therapy’; this could not be further from the truth. Person-centred spiritual, psychological, or medical care must be predicated upon

the person being at the centre while professionals listen to and provide evidence for the person to make informed decisions.

I am also concerned by the misinformation and inaccurate statistics quoted in some briefs and I respectfully direct the committee to the following:

- [A critical commentary on follow-up studies and “desistance” theories about transgender and gender-nonconforming children](#) Julia Temple Newhook, Jake Pyne, Kelley Winters, Stephen Feder, Cindy Holmes, Jemma Tosh, Mari-Lynne Sinnott, Ally Jamieson & Sarah Pickett (2018); and,
- [A Response to Zucker 2018 & Steensma and Cohen-Kettenis 2018](#): International Journal of Transgenderism, 19:2, 246-250, Kelley Winters, Julia Temple Newhook, Jake Pyne, Stephen Feder, Ally Jamieson, Cindy Holmes, Mari-Lynne Sinnott, Sarah Pickett & Jemma Tosh (2018)

Most importantly, I am concerned that Bill C-6, in its current form, inadequately defines and will therefore not prevent, ALL forms of conversion therapy enacted upon trans, non-binary, and gender-diverse Canadians because it addresses only one of many forms of conversion therapy currently used in Canada. The government did not adequately consult trans Canadian Conversion Therapy survivors and the Bill focuses on the popular narrative of conversion therapy as a coercive procedure used on LGB youth to change their sexual orientation.

Specifically, Bill C-6 currently excludes practitioners who insist they are not intending to “change a person’s... gender identity” but whose expressed goal is to *discourage* a gender identity or expression which does not align with the gender the person was assigned at birth.

Amendments are needed to the following sections:

- 320.101 (“definition of conversion therapy”),
- 320.101 (a) and (b) (“exclusions”), and
- 320.102 (2) (“forced conversion therapy”)

Please find the detailed recommendations in the Appendix of this page: <http://cgshe.ca/open-letter-bill-c-6-excludes-conversion-therapy-practices-that-target-trans-people/>

These amendments would ensure Bill C-6:

- **more clearly defines conversion therapy to include** practices that regard any gender identity other than the one assigned at birth as disordered or less desirable,
- **includes conversion therapy that targets gender expression;** and,
- **asserts that consent is invalid, if** risks associated with conversion therapy are not clearly explained to the person who will undergo therapy.

I implore the committee to reevaluate Bill C-6 and determine how the federal government will address ALL conversion therapy practices to which trans Canadians are subjected.

Respectfully,

Karen Luyendyk

" As a parent of two young adults presently in therapy, the idea that removing the gender identity clause from the bill could in fact place my children in more harms way than passing the bill as written or with amendments that define more clearly that all forms of conversion therapy are harmful, dismays me. I can only add my emotional plea to the above brief written by Karen Luyendyk "

Christy Bindhardt.