

To the Justice Committee of the Government of Canada,

Firstly, I would like to thank you for considering the amendments outlined in Bill C-6. I have seen firsthand the lasting suffering that gender conversion therapy can inflict on a person, in my loved ones and friends. Following their exposure to conversion therapy in childhood, I have witnessed transgender friends struggle with lasting and ongoing negative self-image and suicidality.

I realize personal anecdotes can only be considered so far, but my personal observations concur with academic research on the impact of these treatments. Turban et al. found that, across demographic variables, exposure to conversion therapy was significantly associated with severe psychological distress, including suicide attempts.[1] Even if conversion therapy itself--against all logic--does not have a direct causative link with this damage, it is one more component of the social and family rejections that lead to isolation, economic precarity, and poor health outcomes for transgender individuals.

This amendment acknowledges the power that even a well-intentioned therapist has to enforce stigmatizing and harmful beliefs about minority populations. A cisgender identity cannot be the only "acceptable" outcome for a human being's development, if we are to consider ourselves an accepting and progressive society. Furthermore, the harm associated with this approach to gay and transgender people has been demonstrated. Measurable success for these kinds of treatments has not.[2]

Treatment that seeks to turn an individual against an inborn quality, to repudiate and hate a part of themselves, can only lead to psychological harm rather than healing. I have seen it in my friends. I have seen bright, caring women harassed into isolation and fear. I have seen sensitive and intelligent young men shamed into silence. I have seen how an education in self-loathing convinces them they deserve less.

Again, I thank you for protecting Canadian children against the harm that institutions can cause in attempting to enforce homophobic and transphobic standards of treatment. I thank you for protecting Canadian children against the pressures they can face when trying to explore their identity. I thank you for taking steps to prevent the anguish that I have seen in my peers from being repeated for future generations.

1. Turban JL, Beckwith N, Reisner SL, Keuroghlian AS. Association Between Recalled Exposure to Gender Identity Conversion Efforts and Psychological Distress and Suicide Attempts Among Transgender Adults. *JAMA Psychiatry*. 2020;77(1):68–76. doi:10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2019.2285

2. Drescher J, Schwartz A, Casoy F, McIntosh CA, Hurley B, Ashley K, Barber M, Goldenberg D, Herbert SE, LE, Mattson MR, McAfee SG, Pula J, Rosario V, Tompkins DA. The Growing Regulation of Conversion Therapy. *Journal of Medical Regulation*. 2016;102(2):7–12. doi: <https://doi.org/10.30770/2572-1852-102.2.7>

3. Newhook JT, Pyne J, Winters K, Feder S, Holmes C, Tosh J, Sinnott M, Jamieson A, Pickett S A critical commentary on follow-up studies and “desistance” theories about transgender and gender-

nonconforming children. *International Journal of Transgenderism*. 2016;19:2, 212-224, DOI:
10.1080/15532739.2018.1456390