

Submission to House of Commons Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights
RE: Bill C-6, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (conversion therapy)
December 6, 2020

Dear Chair Khalid and Members of the Committee,

I'm writing as the proud mom of a transgender, non-binary young adult, and as a volunteer leader of Pflag Canada's Renfrew County chapter. I'm also a volunteer board member of Pflag Canada, a charitable organization with 50 chapters across Canada offering peer support and other resources for LGBTQ2S individuals and their families and friends.

I am alarmed at efforts by some groups to remove gender identity from bill C-6, and I urge the committee to support the bill in its current form. Protecting some members of our society, but not others, from the harmful and discredited practice of conversion "therapy" would be cruel, inequitable and unconscionable. All LGBTQ2S people deserve equal protections as they navigate a world of discrimination, stigma, hatred and even violence on their journey to being their true selves.

When my child came out more than 10 years ago, I had never heard the term "non-binary." In fact, as a cisgender person growing up in a cis-normative world, I had never given much thought to gender identity. I did my homework and learned that gender is distinct from sexual orientation, defined by our innermost sense of self, and exists on a spectrum. I also learned that LGBTQ youth are at an exponentially higher risk of substance abuse, self-harm and suicide—not because of who they are, but because of how they are treated by society. I was determined not to let this happen to my child. I made sure he knew that I would always love him for who he is and do my best to protect him from harm. After all, that's my job as a parent.

Over my eight years as a Pflag Canada volunteer, trans people of various ages and backgrounds have entrusted me with their stories and their struggles. At a certain point in their journey, they may share the happy news that their family members have started to use their correct pronoun and chosen name. More often than not, their joy and relief are palpable. It's such a simple act, really, but it sends an important and powerful message that you are valued and loved, just as you are.

As a parent and a volunteer, I've learned that the world is a better place when we affirm, respect and celebrate the rich diversity under the LGBTQ2S umbrella. To selectively apply the protections offered by bill C-6 would be a cruel, discriminatory and harmful step in the wrong direction.

Sincerely,

Jill Holroyd