

Sherbourne Health Centre
333 Sherbourne Street
Toronto, Ontario
M5A 2S5
Feb. 27, 2017

Dear Senator,

I'm writing to you on behalf of Sherbourne Health Centre. Based in Toronto, Sherbourne provides high-quality, transformative healthcare and support services, with a focus on LGBTQ communities, people experiencing homelessness, and newcomers to Canada. One of our programs, Rainbow Health Ontario, is provincially-funded to promote the health of Ontario's LGBTQ communities through evidence-based training, research and policy reform—a mandate that is unique in Canada.

As an organization deeply committed to the health and well-being of LGBTQ populations, we wholeheartedly support Bill C-16's proposed amendments to the *Canadian Human Rights Act* and the *Criminal Code*, and we are urging all Canadian Senators to do the same. Adjusting our existing legislation to be inclusive of gender identity and expression is a simple but desperately-needed remedy for a gap in our laws, and one that is long overdue.

We're sure you agree that all Canadians deserve to live free of harassment, violence and discrimination. What you might not know is how horrifyingly frequent these experiences are for trans people in Canada: Ontario's 2014 TransPULSE study found that 20% of participants had been targets of physical or sexual assault for being trans, while another 34% had been verbally threatened or harassed. This bears repeating: a staggering one-fifth to one-third of this sample population was attacked for being who they are.

Violence against trans Canadians also manifests more insidiously: TransPULSE found that 13% of participants had been fired for being trans, with another 15% suspecting they'd been fired based on their gender identity. Specific to healthcare, one in ten people had been refused emergency care or had care ended prematurely because they were trans. These are only a few measures of the persistent and pervasive discrimination experienced by trans Canadians; realities that directly and significantly impact their health and well-being.

While C-16 won't solve these issues overnight, it is a necessary step forward for trans rights in Canada, and no exaggeration to say it is truly a matter of life and death. Now more than ever—at this pivotal time in history when many hard-won gains in human rights seem to be slipping away—it is imperative that our Senators send a clear message at the federal level that Canada is committed to trans equity by passing C-16.

In doing so, you will be honouring Canadian constituents' will, which has already been clearly expressed by our elected Members of Parliament passing this Bill. Moreover, you will be acting to uphold the respect for human rights so integral to our Canadian cultural fabric—in large part thanks to similar legislative protections against systemic disparities, many enshrined through the hard work and advocacy of public servants like you.

If you support C-16, thank you. If you remain opposed or unsure, we are available and eager to talk should you be open to learning more about the human impacts of inequity in our status quo, and the positive effects we know this legislation will have on the communities we serve.

Yours sincerely,



Hazelle Palmer
CEO, Sherbourne Health Centre

