

Dangwal, Shriya

From: Legislative Assembly of Ontario
Sent: June 11, 2020 9:19 PM
To: Standing Committee on Justice Policy
Cc: Ellis, Victoria
Subject: Webform submission: Submission of material 18271

Submitted on Thu, 06/11/2020 - 21:11

Application ID: 18271

Submitted values are:

Bill or item of business: **Bill 161, Smarter and Stronger Justice Act, 2020**

Choose a topic

Do you know the bill title or business (e.g., pre-budget consultations) you'd like to speak or submit material about?

Yes

Choose an application

Which application would you like to submit?

Submit material only

Which deadline would you like to submit your written material for?

[Written Submissions \(Deadline: Friday, June 12, 2020 at 6:00 p.m.\)](#)

Add your information

Are you submitting material as an individual or on behalf of an organization?

I am submitting material as an individual

Name

Christina Riczu

Paste submission

I am writing to you today regarding Bill 161 that is currently on the provincial legislature floor for debate. This Bill is a replacement for the Legal Aid Services ACT1998.

The proposed Bill has language that could possibly weaken legal clinics across Ontario. Low-income communities served by poverty law clinics and specialized clinics focused on ethno-racial communities do not seem to have a protected place in the new legislation apart from the narrow focus on individualized legal services

The Bill has language that could harm your constituents' access to justice and the very fate of legal clinics.

The bill removes access to justice from LAO's (Legal Aid Ontario) core mandate. The purpose of the Legal Aid Services Act is changed from "promot[ing] access to justice throughout Ontario for low-income individuals" to facilitate[ing] the establishment of a flexible and sustainable legal aid system that provides effective and high quality legal aid services throughout Ontario in a client-focused and accountable manner while ensuring value for money"

The bill removes mandatory language around provision of legal services. While the current Legal Aid Services Act states that the Corporation "shall provide legal aid services in the areas of criminal law, family law, clinic law and mental health law", Bill 161 changes this to "may"

My hope is that by contacting you today, you will be reminded of the important services that legal clinic provide that ensure access to justice and battling systemic racism and oppression. I am certain that you are aware of the inequalities faced in the USA, and I certainly hope that you acknowledge that Canada faces those very same issues.

Please do right by your constituents by ensuring that Bill 161 is modified to better serve the people of this province.

Thank you,

Christina Riczu