

Dangwal, Shriya

From: Legislative Assembly of Ontario
Sent: June 12, 2020 1:34 PM
To: Standing Committee on Justice Policy
Cc: Ellis, Victoria
Subject: Webform submission: Submission of material 18511

Submitted on Fri, 06/12/2020 - 13:11

Application ID: 18511

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

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Paste submission

MPP Roman Baber, Chair

Standing Committee on Justice Policy

Mr. Barber,

The Standing Committee on Justice Policy is reviewing Bill 161 which amends the Legal Aid Services Act.

This proposed bill significantly limits the legal aid clinics' abilities to serve their clients. Given legal aid cuts, this bill further creates larger gaps between accessible justice and marginalized communities. This is not the modernization of legal aid that is needed.

As a law student who worked as a criminal law caseworker at a legal aid clinic for more than a year, I can assure you of the value of legal aid clinics for communities that are already neglected and marginalized by our system.

It is clear that clinics are often the last resort for marginalized and vulnerable communities. Legal barriers often are often life-altering for peoples. For vulnerable communities, legal barriers contribute further to generational trauma and systemic poverty. By narrowing crucial terms in this proposed legislation, the result will be a narrowing of services of already limited resources and services. The number of times that clinics have turned away people in their most desperate times already demonstrate the weak institution in place. Your proposed Bill threatens to create an institution that will abandon even more vulnerable peoples.

I demand that the ability of Ontario's community legal clinics to serve marginalized people in our community be preserved. This requires the following changes to be made to the draft bill:

- Reinstate "access to justice" for low-income and disadvantaged communities to the Purpose of the legislation.
- Community legal clinics must be recognized as the foundation for the provision of clinic law services.
- Reinstate obligations to provide legal aid services across Ontario.
- Define community legal clinics as:
"community legal clinic" means a community legal organization structured as an independent corporation without share capital:
 - (a) whose board of directors are members of the community or communities served, or who have a substantial association or interest in the community or communities served;
 - (b) that provides legal aid services for the community it serves on a basis other than fee for service; and,
 - (c) that determines the legal needs of the individuals and communities served by the community legal clinic.

This is important to me and my community. Quite frankly, this should be important to you. In light of these volatile times where many systemic issues are being brought forward; these times where "Black Lives Matter" (as they always should have); these times where demographics like Indigenous peoples continuously struggle; these times where the lived experiences of so many vulnerable communities need to be addressed and remedied, this Bill must be changed to reflect these times.

Our justice system needs to take steps forwards -- rather than backwards.

To move forward without changes akin to our suggested changes would be an invitation to take steps backward. I hope you will take into account the public's comments before moving forward with this bill. Instead, I urge you that the Ontario Legislature reject Schedules 15 and 16 of Bill 161 and instead engage in public, meaningful, and open consultations with low-income and marginalized communities and their clinics about needed reforms to the legal aid system in Ontario.

This is the time to listen to the communities, the clinics, and their lived experiences.

Sincerely,
Kristy Wong

