

Dangwal, Shriya

From: Legislative Assembly of Ontario
Sent: June 12, 2020 4:24 PM
To: Standing Committee on Justice Policy
Cc: Ellis, Victoria
Subject: Webform submission: Submission of material 18666

Submitted on Fri, 06/12/2020 - 15:18

Application ID: 18666

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

Add your information

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

I am submitting material as an individual

Name

Colin Hunt

Contact phone number

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Email address

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Paste submission

MPP Roman Baber, Chair

Standing Committee on Justice Policy

Mr. Barber,

I am a first year law student at the University of Toronto. I am writing to support the demands of my colleagues

in relation to Bill 161 (see below). Myself and many of my fellow students volunteered and/or worked at many of these legal clinics this year. Simply put, as it stands these clinics provide vital services to members of our community. They can be the difference between someone unjustly losing their home, their source of income or their freedom. They protect injured workers and victims of domestic violence.

Despite the incredible community need for these services, these clinics are often underfunded, understaffed and those who work there are underpaid. This undercuts the ability of these clinics to serve community members.

At U of T's DLS low-income clinic, we often have to wait-list or turn down community members, even if they meet eligibility requirements and have a legitimate legal issue that we would normally provide assistance with, simply because there are not enough staff lawyers to take on the volume of cases offered. At other clinics, important tasks are often shifted to under-qualified and inexperienced student volunteers, sometimes with inadequate lawyer-supervision, not through any fault of the clinics, but rather out of simple necessity due to lack of resources and a high demand for services.

I encourage you to think of these clinics and the communities they serve and to consider our demands:

- Colin Hunt

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

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.

Sincerely,