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WOMEN'S LEGAL
EDUCATION & ACTION FUND
FONDS D'ACTION ET D'ÉDUCATION
JURIDIQUE POUR LES FEMMES

November 16, 2021

The Honourable Doug Ford
Premier of Ontario
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Steven Del Duca
Leader of the Ontario Liberal Party
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The Honourable Christine Elliott
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Andrea Horwath
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France Gélinas
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Mike Schreiner
Leader of the Green Party of Ontario
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Dear Premier, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health, Leaders of the Opposition, and Health Critics:

Re: Gender Affirming Health Care Advisory Committee Act

I am writing in my capacity as Executive Director & General Counsel of the Women's Legal Education and Action Fund (LEAF). LEAF is a national, non-profit organization that works to advance the substantive equality rights of women and girls – both cis and trans – through litigation, law reform, and public education. Our national office is located in Toronto and we have eleven volunteer-run member branches across the country, including six in Ontario (Thunder Bay, Windsor, Hamilton, Toronto, Kingston, and Ottawa).

In the midst of Trans Awareness Week, I am writing to echo the advocacy of Wisdom2Action and ask you to support the Gender Affirming Health Care Advisory Committee Act. Creating a provincial advisory committee on gender affirming care is an essential first step to improving the health and health care of transgender, non-binary, 2-Spirit, and gender diverse people in Ontario.

Many gender affirming procedures and treatments, such as facial feminization surgery, permanent hair removal, and chest contouring, remain uncovered or only partially covered through Ontario's health insurance. This reality is particularly concerning when we recognize that 41% of trans and gender diverse people in Ontario live in low-income households. Trans and gender diverse people, who often live in poverty, have to spend thousands of dollars out of pocket for medically necessary health care.

Gender affirming health care is recognized as medically necessary by the World Professional Association for Transgender Health and many other recognized medical institutions and organizations

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in Canada and around the world. Canadian universal health care operates under the principles of universality and accessibility, but the current state of trans health care means that existing coverage is neither universal, nor anywhere close to accessible to the majority of trans people.

Gender affirming health care improves health outcomes for trans communities. It is time to listen to experts in trans health, especially trans communities, and come together to improve gender affirming health care in Ontario.

As an organization that advocates for the substantive equality of cis and trans women and girls, LEAF is asking you to support this bill. As a matter of public interest, equitable health care and human rights, the time to act is now.

Sincerely,

Pam Hrick
Executive Director & General Counsel
Women's Legal Education and Action Fund (LEAF)

CC:

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