

CULTURE, TOURISM, EUROPE AND EXTERNAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

CENSUS (AMENDMENT) (SCOTLAND) BILL

SUBMISSION FROM LEEZE LAWRENCE

In 2011 the compulsory sex question guidance stated that trans people should answer with the sex they self-identify as, regardless of what's on their birth certificate.

Why was this important:

The reason this guidance for the sex question was important was that it meant that the census was recognising us and our community, it meant that the data gathered would reflect our community for the services our government funds, implements and legislates for. It ensured that trans people would not have to roll back their identity in being asked questions that go on permanent record for centuries.

One of the first steps of a transgender person's journey in their transition, it is to move forward with self identification, live and appear in the sex of what one feels represents them but most of all it is to mentally acknowledge that identity publicly and socially. For a transgender person, it is the biggest step to make in coming out and living authentically as themselves. Any sort of rollback on trans inclusion in the Census mandatory sex question would be a set back for the individual and community, asking a trans person to identify their sex at birth is humiliating, years of hard work and confidence building disregarded by the individual in a few short questions as it would reflect that the government does not recognise them.

I feel the questions on the census must represent every member of society and it is those the questions represent that should be involved in shaping those questions, a roll back on the 2011 compulsory sex question would mean that the outcome of the data gathered would be flawed in its representation of the transgender community and that would set a dangerous precedent where the negative impact of a compulsory Census question on a vulnerable and much misunderstood minority group would have by needlessly disregarded.

Transgender, including non-binary, recognition is moving forward progressively around the world and Scotland should remain committed to improving equality. I feel it is a government's responsibility to make sure all its citizens are represented under the census for future data to reflect accurately on every citizen especially the most marginalised in society and under-represented and not regressively change questions to ones that don't reflect with accuracy of how its citizens live in Scottish society.

The possible negativities of requiring the compulsory sex question to try to force trans people to answer in a way that does not reflect how they live in society would most likely mean that trans people just don't take part, there will be bad data and that very inequality continues with flawed outcomes, it also may mean the census forcing trans people who haven't legally changed their gender to fill in forms with humiliation and distress leaving them with disdain for future data collection.