

**Written Evidence to Women & Equalities Select Committee submitted by Catherine Bann in a personal capacity.**

Summary

I am not offering this evidence on behalf of an organisation. I do not have any evidence to present of the impact of single-sex service provision on my life. I am not a sexual violence survivor, I am not the mother of a trans-identified child, nor am I a trans-widow. I do not even offer this evidence as a woman (though I am). I wish to present evidence as an “everyman”, to outline how changes in the Gender Recognition Act will have an impact on society as a whole if belief systems are incorporated into law.

Written Submission

1. I believe in the liberty of the individual over their own life and their own physical body. If an adult person of sound mind wishes to modify their body to make it appear more like that of the opposite sex, it is their right to do so.
2. If an individual suffers from body dysmorphia, I believe that services should be in place to offer support and help to that person, in the form of counselling, and potentially support for a sex-change.
3. I believe that such individuals should have the potential to modify certain official documents to make it clear that they are the opposite gender to that which they were born. I do not believe that their birth sex should be erased entirely, as this is important for certain reasons such as census data, medical treatment, data-analysis, criminal records/DBS checks.
4. I believe all transgender people, whether they have a GRC, or have undergone a sex change, or have transitioned in any meaningful way, should have the same rights as any other individual, should be free from prejudice, and society should make sensible adjustments to allow them to live their lives as smoothly as possible.
5. I believe that definitions are important, and how we define words has meaningful implications in the way that society is structured.
6. The definition of a woman (adult human female) or a man (adult human male) is of crucial importance in the way that the Equalities Act 2010 is implemented.
7. It will have serious consequences for all of society and particularly women, if the definition of 'woman' for the purposes of the law, is changed to include male people and vice versa.
8. Some male people may indeed feel like a woman, but apart from the obvious question of 'how can they possibly know what a woman feels like', this poses a serious issue about whether society is structured around subjective feelings, or objective material reality.
9. 'Self-identification' into a category which excludes you by definition, makes that category meaningless. Definitions are necessarily exclusive. The category has often been defined in order to ensure that people falling into that category have equal rights, have access to spaces designed for them, access to certain resources and so on. For example, there was rightly an outcry after a person who is white, identified as black, and occupied a role designed for black and minority ethnic people. In the same way, there are spaces, roles and provisions designed for women as a way of rectifying the exclusion of women due to institutional and historical sexism and oppression. The reason why women have been the oppressed sex class centres on our reproductive capacity.
10. Transwomen remain male, and though a compassionate society should treat them *as if* they are women in most circumstances, there remain some instances where their sex necessitates their exclusion from female spaces/provisions/roles in order to preserve women's rights. The law (GRA) must not force women to include males in previously single-sex spaces.
11. On the subject of 'non-binary', gender non-conforming people who do not identify with the

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stereotypes associated with men or women (which is essentially what non-binary means) are still either male or female. It is a nonsense to write into law, or to create a protected minority based on such an 'identity'. This is a *feeling* of discomfort with gender stereotypes and if the law starts to change to accommodate people who feel this way, will the law need to change to include other nebulous concepts such as demi-sexual/pan-sexual, or any other internal concept of self? It is not possible to be born in the wrong body, and while everyone must be free to believe that, and express those beliefs openly, that does not make it true and the law must reflect that.

12. Societies that are structured around faith and belief lead to intolerance, lack of freedom of thought and expression. People who refuse to believe in something for which they can see no evidence, are ostracised or even criminalised for heresy.
13. The law must be based on material reality, biology and evidence, not on beliefs, however deep rooted. Support organisations, charities and individuals may use whatever definitions they choose, but it is concomitant upon government and the judiciary to refer only to factual evidence and provable reality in their decision-making.
14. Sex is dimorphic, immutable, and scientifically unassailable and therefore any law or statute or official guidance must reflect this, and not the shifting, subjective and ill-defined concept of 'gender'.

Signed

*C Bann*

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