

Julissa Stewart

1V0

Email: Julissa\_stewart@outlook.com

March 8, 2026

VIA E-mail: Legc.Office@novascotia.ca

**Standing Committee on Public Bills**

c/o Sarah, Legislative Counsel  
Office of the Legislative Counsel  
CIBC Building  
802-1809 Barrington Street  
Halifax NS B3J 3K8  
Phone: (902) 424-8942

**Re: Opposition to Bill 201 – Justice and Social Services Act (Submission to Public Bills Committee)**

Dear Legislative Counsel,

I am writing as a concerned resident of Nova Scotia, personally affected by the child protection system, to **strongly oppose the passage of Bill 201 and urge its withdrawal in favor of a comprehensive public inquiry under the Public Inquiries Act**. While the bill proposes amendments to the Children and Family Services Act (CFSA), Beneficiaries Designation Act, Domestic Violence Intervention Act, Regulated Professions Network Act, and Social Workers Act, it represents an **insufficient, rushed response that prioritizes government protection over genuine accountability and family integrity**. My opposition is rooted in personal experience, the bill's potential to silence families and enable overreach, and its timing as a possible diversion from calls for independent review.

**Personal Context and Impact of Existing Legislation**

The child protection system in Nova Scotia has profound effects on families, often extending beyond direct parties to impact extended networks through association. This lack of due process denies affected individuals the opportunity to defend against baseless allegations, highlighting systemic failures in investigation, evidence gathering, and accountability under the Social Workers Act.

Such practices not only undermine individual rights but also exacerbate broader issues like parental alienation and coercive control, which are epidemic child protection matters. Bill 201's expansions, such as enhanced publication bans (Clauses 5, 7, and 8) and the repeal of the Social Workers Act (Clause 12) in favor of the Regulated Health Professions Act, would compound these problems by further limiting transparency and transitional safeguards for ongoing complaints. For example, ongoing complaints with

the Nova Scotia College of Social Workers risks dismissal or invalidation without clear protections, while expanded bans could prevent families from sharing experiences publicly—even non-identifying ones—to seek support or expose misconduct.

These amendments risk **entrenching government insulation over public accountability**, potentially **infringing on constitutional rights**. As established in *New Brunswick (Minister of Health and Community Services) v. G.(J.)*, [1999] 3 S.C.R. 46, s. 7 of the Charter requires effective participation in child protection proceedings, including access to justice for indigent parents, while s. 2(b) protects freedom of expression. **Silencing families does not promote child integrity or family preservation under CFSA s. 2; instead, it grants unchecked power to state actors, enabling intrusive interventions contrary to principles of least intrusive measures and procedural fairness**. If this bill were already law, sharing even anonymized accounts like this one could be prohibited, stifling advocacy and reform.

This reactionary approach—rushed without broad consultation—**prioritizes bureaucratic incentives over the needs of vulnerable populations**. Rather than empowering social workers with more authority without robust oversight, **Nova Scotia requires an independent public inquiry to examine these gaps holistically**, as outlined in my February 2026 petition to all MLAs. **Only through evidence-based review can we ensure reforms truly protect children, uphold parental rights, and prevent harm from systemic deficiencies**.

### Concerns with the Bill's Content and Process

Bill 201 appears designed more for government convenience than for children and families. This bill highlights **superficial fixes that fail to address deeper gaps**. The bill's specific clauses raise significant alarms, as highlighted in public submissions and my own analysis:

- **Beneficiaries Designation Act Amendments (Clauses 2-4)**: Allowing electronic signatures for beneficiary designations under plans like pensions or insurance seems innocuous but **raises suspicions in the child welfare context**. If a child in ministerial care dies, this could enable quick transfers of benefits without adequate oversight, potentially **prioritizing administrative efficiency over family rights** or investigations into care failures. Why include this in a child-focused bill unless to facilitate **financial control**?
- **Extension of Ministerial Care to Age 25 (Clauses 5 and 9)**: Clause 5 amends s. 14A of the CFSA to allow the minister to provide services to persons up to age 25, while Clause 9 enables regulations for these services. This **extends authority over young adults, potentially against their will**, by permitting social workers to apply for court orders before age 19 to **keep them in care**. As discussed in submissions like that from the NSGEU (partial support but with staffing concerns), this **risks overreach, delaying independence and treating adults as children** without evidence of need. Social

workers could deem someone "not mature enough," **shifting power from individuals to the state.**

- **Expansion of the Child Abuse Register (Clause 7):** This amends s. 63 of the CFSA to include individuals with absolute or conditional discharges (not convictions) on the register, shifting authority from judicial discretion to **automatic administrative consequences**. As Allan Quinn's submission aptly notes, this alters the meaning of discharges and risks weaponizing false allegations, destroying livelihoods without due process. Without a conviction or diagnosis, parents could be labeled abusers based on unsubstantiated claims, **exacerbating family breakdowns and violating fairness principles.**

- **Expanded Publication Bans (Clause 8):** Amending s. 94 of the CFSA to extend bans after a child's death or proceedings end, with ministerial consent required for exceptions, further **silences victims and families**. Submissions from David G. Hutt (on behalf of CBC and CMLA) and Kimberley Trudel highlight how this muffles public awareness, hinders reform, and **could jail parents for speaking out** on social media. Why grant the minister sole power to decide if publication is in the "best interest" or for "administration of justice"? This **covers up deaths in care and contradicts transparency**, as seen in cases where families seek accountability.

- **Domestic Violence Intervention Act Amendments (Clause 10):** Extending emergency protection orders from 30 days to one year **overrides other custody orders** (except CFSA) and alters status quo in courts, potentially **manufacturing precedents against vulnerable parties**. While aimed at safety, it **risks abuse without safeguards**, as noted in broader concerns about **weaponized systems**.

- **Repeal of the Social Workers Act (Clause 12):** Moving social workers under the Regulated Health Professions Act diminishes their social justice focus, **treating them as health professionals even in non-health roles (e.g., child welfare)**. Submissions from Kaitlin Cantrell, Corah Hales, Patricia Stephens-Brown, and others emphasize this **erodes autonomy, ethics, and advocacy against oppression**. The NSCSW supports the framework for "safe(r) practice," but **lack of consultation is evident—why repeal without input?** This could enable social workers to label "emotional abuse" without expertise, tying back to Clause 7's register risks.

**Fast-Tracking and Limited Public Input:** Introduced on February 25, 2026, **just one week** after my February 16 outreach to all 55 MLAs (including sponsor Minister Barbara Adams) about a petition for public inquiry into the CFSA, Legal Aid Act, and Social Workers Act, the bill's rapid progression **raises questions about transparency**. The moment I tried to initiate a public inquiry because of what they've done to me and other families, they came back with this fast-tracked bill. Notice was minimal, confined to the legislature website, **limiting meaningful public engagement**. This haste **undermines democratic principles**, especially for legislation affecting vulnerable populations. **Child and family safety cannot be fast-tracked without thorough consultation—doing so**

risks entrenching harm. Additionally, not all submissions are visible in downloads (e.g., potential omissions like Robert Wright's), further **eroding trust**.

This bill feels like a "bandaid" **diversion to avoid the independent scrutiny my petition demands**. On February 16, I emailed Minister Adams and others with a briefing note, citizen petition, and MLA support form calling for an inquiry to examine exactly these issues: effectiveness of practices, family preservation, social worker workloads, legal barriers, equity, guardians ad litem accountability, and complaint processes. The petition (attached) has garnered support and highlights the need for evidence-based reform via sworn testimony and open hearings, as empowered under Public Inquiries Act ss. 2-5A. Passing Bill 201 preempts this, substituting piecemeal changes for holistic review.

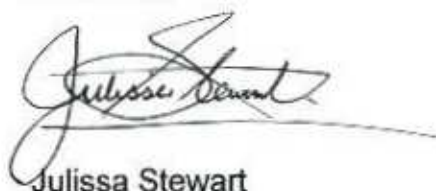
**Recommendations:**

- **Withdraw Bill 201:** Halt proceedings to allow for a public inquiry first, ensuring reforms are grounded in independent evidence, not reactive amendments.
- **Launch Public Inquiry:** As detailed in my attached petition, an inquiry would compel testimony, protect participants (s. 5A), and yield transparent recommendations, rebuilding public confidence and closing accountability gaps.
- **Enhance Transparency:** If proceeding, make all submissions (including any missing ones like Robert Wright's) fully visible online; extend consultation periods for future bills on child protection.

Nova Scotia's child protection system **must serve the people**, including vulnerable children and families, **not insulate government from oversight**. Rushing Bill 201 erodes trust and democracy. I urge the committee to reject it and prioritize a public inquiry for true reform.

Thank you for considering this submission. I am available for questions at 902-318-0071 and/or [Julissa\\_stewart@outlook.com](mailto:Julissa_stewart@outlook.com).

Sincerely,



Julissa Stewart