



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

25th June 2021

Jean Contrevent,

RE: PROTECTION OF RETAIL WORKERS.

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of the *Police, Crime, Sentencing & Courts Bill*, specifically relating to the protection of retail employees; I have read your comments with interest. I was also grateful to you for your request for me to go along to the recent Westminster Hall debate on this subject, but unfortunately was unable to do so owing to other parliamentary commitments.

This is an issue that I take incredibly seriously, and I am deeply concerned by cases of violence and abuse on the high street, particularly in retail premises. Those who work on the high street and in other outlets should be able to go about their work without fear of abuse and intimidation. Quite simply, retailers should not see abuse as part of the job and I was sorry to hear of the experiences of some of those who have written to me locally as part of this campaign.

It was a positive step forward when Ministers announced a call for evidence to provide a greater understanding of the scale of the issue.

In response to the call for evidence, the Government has recognised that there are issues that need to be dealt with, and I am encouraged by the Government's robust response. This includes working with the National Retail Crime Steering Group (NRCSG) on a best practice guide to support staff in reporting these crimes, strengthening and making full use of existing laws, and improving data sharing between businesses and the police.

I do appreciate the strength of feeling behind the calls for the Government to legislate in this area through the *Police, Crime, Sentencing & Courts Bill*. However, I do not believe such a change is necessary. It is already the case that the Sentencing Council has set out guidelines in which it specifically refers to people such as retail workers in an important public service position, which means that the courts should be increasing sentences and finding aggravating factors where shop workers have been the victims of crime.

More broadly, I understand that police demand is changing and becoming increasingly complex and it is the first priority of any government to protect the public. As such, the Government has a key responsibility to ensure Police & Crime Commissioners have the necessary funding to keep communities safe.



Indeed, the clear commitment made by the Prime Minister to put more officers back on our streets is an important step forward. He made it clear in his first speech on the steps of Downing Street that making our streets safer is a key priority. You may be pleased to know that nearly 9,000 police officers have been recruited since the Government launched its 20,000 new officers by March 2023 recruitment drive.

I recognise that the violence and abuse that shop workers can face can have a significant impact, not only physically, but mentally and emotionally, and we must ensure that all the action being taken enables shop workers to feel safer. With that in mind, I will be sure to share your concerns with my ministerial colleagues.

Once again, thank you for having taken the time to contact me and if I can ever be of any further assistance to you then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Tom Pursglove'.

**TOM PURSGLOVE MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE**