



**HOUSE OF COMMONS**  
LONDON SW1A 0AA

10<sup>th</sup> February 2023

*Jean Contreant*

**RE: GENDER RECOGNITION REFORM (SCOTLAND) BILL**

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of the *Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill*; your comments upon which I have read with great interest.

I am determined that everyone in the UK should be free to live their lives and fulfil their potential, regardless of their sex, gender identity, race, or disability. I am also clear that transgender people should be free to prosper in modern Britain.

I am encouraged that my colleagues in the Government Equalities Office have, over recent years, looked carefully and thoroughly into the gender recognition process, including considering potential changes to the *Gender Recognition Act 2004*. After careful consideration, it is their view that this existing legislation strikes the right balance between ensuring there are proper checks and balances in the system, and ensuring there is support in place for people who want to change their legal sex.

However, as I understand it, it was clear from the consultation that changes are needed to improve the process and the experience transgender people have when applying for a Gender Recognition Certificate (GRC). When responding to the National LGBT survey, transgender people highlighted two key obstacles in the process: bureaucracy and cost. These are being addressed, with the entire procedure moving online and the existing £140 fee being reduced to £5. This fee reduction is already in effect and I understand that the Government's Equality Hub is working at speed to move the application process online, with more details to be set out in due course. I know that the Government wants to ensure that applying for a GRC is as straightforward and dignified as possible, and I am confident these changes will make a noticeable difference to the transgender people who use the system.

Together with my colleagues in the Government, I want every individual, regardless of their sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity, to have the confidence and the freedom to be themselves.

Furthermore, I believe that transgender people deserve respect, support and understanding. I am aware that the announcement by the Secretary of State for Scotland, which will prevent the Bill from proceeding to Royal Assent, is about the legislation's consequences for the operation of UK-wide equalities protections and other reserved matters.




It is the assessment of the UK Government that the Bill will have significantly adverse effects, including the impact on the operation of the *Equality Act 2010*. In particular, the Government has said it shares the concerns of many experts and civil society groups regarding the potential impact of the Bill on the safety of women and children.

This decision has not been taken lightly, and the UK Government fully respects the Scottish Parliament's competency to make decisions within devolved areas, but it cannot ignore the significant consequences of this Bill for reserved areas. I support that position and share the concern.

I do appreciate your concerns regarding this very emotive issue. As mentioned above, you may welcome the fact that the Government concluded that existing legislation strikes the correct balance in this area. However, I fully understand the strength of feeling regarding this issue and have therefore ensured that the Equalities Minister is aware of your views.

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,*  


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