



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

23rd March 2024

Dear Amendment,

RE: RETAIL CRIME

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of your concerns about keeping retail workers safe. I have read your comments carefully and with interest.

The Government legislated to introduce a statutory aggravating factor for assault against any public facing worker via section 156 of the *Police, Crime, Sentencing & Courts Act 2022*; legislation which I was proud to take through Parliament as a Minister. This ensures the public facing nature of a victim's role will be considered as an aggravating factor when it comes to sentencing for assault offences.

I also welcome the further steps the Government is taking as part of the 'Retail Crime Action Plan'. This plan includes a police commitment to prioritise urgently attending the scene of shoplifting instances involving violence against a shop worker, where security guards have detained an offender, or where attendance is needed to secure evidence. I understand that police attendance will be assessed based on risk, and prolific or juvenile offenders will be treated with elevated priority.

I am aware that as part of the plan, the police have also reaffirmed their pledge to follow-up on any evidence that could reasonably lead to catching a perpetrator. Forces will step-up targeted hotspots in badly affected areas. The plan also sets out advice for retailers on how to provide the best possible evidence for the police to pursue in any case. Retailers should send CCTV footage of the whole incident, and an image of the shoplifter from the digital evidence management system, as quickly as possible after an offence has been committed.

I do appreciate the level of concern around this issue, and I can assure you that the Government is committed to ensuring that retail workers are safe. I am aware that the Government is not supporting the proposed amendment for a range of reasons.

It is already a criminal offence to assault a retail worker, and the proposed new offence would replace only common assault, and would not make any difference or replace other more serious forms of assault. Further, the clause only targets retail workers, and the Government is aware that there are quite a few other workers who also suffer from appalling abuse, which needs to be stopped. The Government took the significant step in introducing a measure that made it a statutory aggravating factor where the victim of any assault - not just common assault - was a public facing worker, which includes retail workers. As such, when judges pass a sentence and the victim is a public-facing worker - that includes retail workers - they are obliged by primary legislation to consider a longer sentence than they otherwise would.



I have been assured that the Government will continue to monitor the success of the 'Retail Crime Action Plan' and if a case is made that tightening up the law is necessary to address the serious problems in this area, then this would not be ruled out in the future.

Further, the Home Office has created a new business and policing partnership that will radically improve the way retailers are able to share intelligence with policing, to better understand the tactics used by organised retail crime gangs and identify more offenders. This will include development of a new information sharing platform and training for retailers.

I can assure you that the Government is committed to keeping retail workers safe and cracking down on shoplifting.

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**