CALL FOR EVIDENCE ON THE EDUCATION (SCOTLAND) BILL
Response from Carole Henderson

General
The principal proposal in the Bill relating to Gaelic education is that a statutory process should be put in place to enable authorities to assess and respond to parental requests for GME within a reasonable timescale.

This would be welcome, although that would not confer a right to GME on parents who wish that for their children, even if a full assessment supports that making such provision would be reasonable.

I would urge the Committee to look at Section 11, in particular, in this regard and suggest amendments to ensure the Bill will deliver new GME provision and that local authorities will make new provision in the event that a full assessment finds that to be feasible.

Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education
I believe that authoritative Guidance on Gaelic Education is required to deal with issues that arise with quality of provision.

Guidance should, among other matters, define what GME is and what outcomes parents should expect when enrolling their children. I believe that pupils being taught in GME should have access to support services, including additional support needs, in Gaelic. Therefore, Guidance should address what constitutes an acceptable Gaelic ethos in primary schools with GME provision, and in secondary schools with a large cohort of pupils who have gone through GME in primary. This must extend to provision outwith the classroom.

In addition, Guidance should address:
- The length of time that is appropriate for immersion in Gaelic
- Aspects of ongoing CPD for teachers
- How best to deal with the ongoing need for teaching resources
- What constitutes a Gaelic school and the point at which it would be desirable for an existing unit to become a Gaelic school
- Ways in which GME can be strengthened using external bodies collaborating with schools to enhance the educational experience

Conclusion
In my view, nothing short of a clear entitlement to GME is required to ensure the aim of increasing numbers in GME is realized. This needs to be alongside authoritative Statutory Guidance to deliver a more coherent service to pupils and parents, both in and outwith the classroom environment.