We welcome this opportunity to provide evidence to the Committee in relation to the above Bill and related Policy Memorandum.

Many Baptist Churches in Scotland affiliated to the Baptist Union of Scotland are directly involved in efforts to address the destructive impact of alcohol abuse on our society. As a result of dealing with the negative impact on families, communities and society in general, they are highly aware of the extent to which these undermine relationships and result in a range of consequences where children are particularly vulnerable to the consequences of abuse by parents who do not exercise due care and responsibility in their use of alcohol.

The Baptist Union of Scotland is therefore fully supportive of efforts to address the abuse of alcohol within Scotland. We recognise that this problem is not unique to Scotland but that it is clear that consumption in Scotland is higher and is continuing to increase at a higher rate than in other parts of the UK and so there is clear justification for taking action in Scotland distinctively ahead of any consideration of broader action across the UK.

The exposure of our churches to the adverse consequences of alcohol abuse lead us to be fully aligned with the need, as expressed in the Policy Memorandum to “reduce alcohol consumption in Scotland, in particular reducing the consumption of alcohol by harmful drinkers, and reduce the impact that alcohol misuse and overconsumption has on public health, crime, public services, productivity, and the economy as a whole.” We agree that a wide strategic approach to tackling alcohol misuse is needed and that action to set minimum pricing structure is a valuable component of such an approach based on the evidence which has been compiled to demonstrate the success of such efforts elsewhere in reducing the levels of consumption of those who would be regarded as “harmful drinkers”.

We believe it is important to underpin legislative action of this nature with support for those in the community who have suffered from the effects of alcohol abuse, whether on their own part or by others with whom they come into contact. To this end, Baptist churches in Scotland will continue to engage with those in their community in direct action of both a preventative nature (seeking to provide care and support which avoids people suffering from the adverse effects of alcohol abuse) and of a responsive nature to assist those who are victims of this.

Baptist Union of Scotland