



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Rachael Hamilton MSP
Member for Ettrick, Roxburgh & Berwickshire

Dear Convener,

We are writing to you with regards to the Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill. As you are aware, this is a very sensitive area of debate and there are strong views on all sides, reflected in the quantity of evidence sessions the Equalities and Human Rights Committee has heard when discussing this legislation.

Last month, the United Nations Rapporteur on Violence against Women and Girls, Reem Alsalem wrote a letter expressing her concerns regarding this Bill. Specifically, Mrs Alsalem shared the concern that proposals in this legislation could ‘potentially open the door for violent males who identify as men to abuse the process of acquiring a gender certificate and the rights that are associated with it. This presents potential risks to the safety of women in all their diversity (including women born female, transwomen, and gender non-conforming women).’ Earlier this week, 28 organisations and individuals that promote women’s rights wrote a letter agreeing with Mrs Alsalem’s letter, sharing her concerns regarding the potential impact of the Bill on women and girls.

On Tuesday, we held a meeting with Reem Alsalem who reiterated her concerns regarding the changes made by this legislation to the current process of obtaining a Gender Recognition Certificate. In the meeting, we heard again the concerns expressed in Ms Alsalem’s letter that parts of the Bill that pose a real threat to the safety of women in Scotland, and it seems clear that further scrutiny is required to address this.

In the interests of applying this added scrutiny, we believe that it would to the benefit of the entire Equalities Committee to be also given the opportunity to hear evidence from Reem Alsalem. It is often claimed that the Bill has already undergone extensive scrutiny throughout the legislative and pre-legislative process. Whilst we have heard a great deal of evidence, that claim does not take into consideration new, highly relevant information that is available such as that Ms Alsalem is providing, alongside – for example – the Cass Review.

With that in mind, we believe that in order to ensure the Bill is informed by the most up to date information, the committee should hear evidence from Ms Alsalem at the earliest possible opportunity, and certainly prior to stage 3 proceedings.

Thank you for your consideration and we are looking forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours sincerely,

Rachael Hamilton MSP
Pam Gosal MSP

The Constituency Office of Rachael Hamilton MSP
7, Abbey Court, Kelso TD5 7JA
01573 224862
rachael.hamilton.msp@parliament.scot