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Dear Karen

Thank you for your letter of 17 December 2025. I acknowledge the Committee's close interest in the next steps for the Human Rights Bill and I fully appreciate the significance of this legislation, as well as the importance of its timely introduction.

As you know, last month, the First Minister attended the Scottish Human Rights Commission's reception in Parliament to mark Human Rights Day, reiterating a firm commitment to the Bill. I can assure you of the Scottish Government's resolve to uphold and advance human rights, especially in the face of concerning developments unfolding in the wider global context.

We are therefore committed to introducing the Bill in the next Parliamentary session, subject to the outcome of the Scottish Parliament election. With that in mind, we continue to undertake engagement with stakeholders to test and refine proposals for the Bill, informed by the publication of a detailed discussion paper last summer. The Human Rights Incorporation and Implementation Oversight Board – comprised of representatives from civil society, public authorities and academia – continues to oversee this work, and provides advice on taking forward further Bill development and engagement. This will continue in the period ahead.

I have outlined below the current position of the other Bills that the Committee has noted in its letter.

Learning Disabilities, Autism and Neurodivergence Bill

Following a full consultation on the Learning Disabilities, Autism and Neurodivergence (LDAN) Bill and subsequent additional engagement with the Advisory Panels throughout 2025, work on the LDAN Bill is continuing, to enable introduction during the next Parliamentary session, subject to the priorities of the next Government.

Misogyny Bill

As you are aware, in May 2025, the Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Home Affairs announced that the Scottish Government will not introduce a Misogyny Bill in this Parliament.

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However, we want new criminal law protections for women and girls to be introduced without undue delay during this Parliamentary session. This is why the Scottish Government intends to lay an SSI before the Scottish Parliament in early 2026 to add the characteristic of sex to the Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Act 2021.

I acknowledge that there is more to do on how to prevent misogyny in the first place, and should the Scottish Parliament pass hate crime legal protections for women and girls, there would remain aspects of misogyny recommendations to be considered further, particularly with regard to the criminalisation of misogynistic harassment. Any decisions on future misogyny legislation will be a matter for the next administration.

Ending Conversion Practices Bill

Similarly, in May 2025, I confirmed that the Scottish Government will not be introducing legislation to end conversion practices in the current Parliamentary session. We continue to prioritise our engagement with the UK Government, which has reaffirmed its commitment to introducing draft legislation that delivers a comprehensive, trans-inclusive ban on conversion practices. We will continue to work with the UK government on a Bill that applies across all settings, is trans-inclusive and age-inclusive, and does not include any exemption for consent.

If the UK Government Bill does not meet these priorities, then we will publish our own Bill in year one of the next Parliamentary session. In the meantime, we will continue to prepare legislation for the Scottish Parliament should a legislative solution in the UK Parliament not be possible, maintain dialogue with stakeholders, and develop non-legislative measures to end conversion practices and support survivors. We are providing £121,996 funding this year to LGBT Health and Wellbeing for the delivery of a helpline service to provide support for victims and survivors of conversion practices in Scotland. The Scottish Government remains unequivocally committed to LGBTQIA+ equality and to delivering robust protections against harmful and abusive practices.

I hope the above information is helpful to the Committee in setting out our ongoing legislative work and continued commitment to advance rights and equality across Scotland.

Yours sincerely,

KAUKAB STEWART

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