

PE1890/N Rhoda Grant MSP submission of 17 February 2023

Dear Convener,

I am writing to you in relation to petitions PE1890 and PE1924 which I understand are being considered by the Health and Sport Committee on the 21st February.

These two petitions highlight a real concern felt amongst communities that rural healthcare provision is not equal to urban counterparts. Additionally, there is the added fear that the ageing population, depopulation, lack of housing, and recruitment and retention issues are exacerbating the problem. I share these fears and I believe that there are deep health disparities within rural Scotland that are not being addressed. I would urge the Health and Sport Committee to conduct an inquiry into rural healthcare in Scotland.

Both PE1890 and PE1924 Have been submitted by Caithness residents. In this region women are expected to travel over 100 miles to access maternity services, often in labour, in Raigmore Hospital. That is not acceptable especially as both Moray and now, Dumfries and Galloway received independent reviews into their maternity models. Additionally, and more widely in Highland, mental health services are under intense pressure because of recruitment issues. Many Women's Services have been centralised and new rural hospitals are not fully utilised because the health board cannot, and sometimes will not, recruit and when they do they cannot house health professionals locally.

NHS Highland have announced a review into Women's Services in Caithness – and this is welcome – however this will not cover maternity services which is desperately needing in Caithness.

I would urge with the Health and Sport Committee to conduct an inquiry into rural healthcare to ensure that delivery of healthcare has a degree of parity regardless of location.

Best Wishes,
Rhoda