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Clare Haughey MSP
Convener
Health, Social Care and Sport Committee
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

Via email: hscs.committee@parliament.scot

Dear Convener

National Care Service (Scotland) Bill

As the deadline for stage 1 scrutiny of the National Care Service (Scotland) Bill approaches, I'm writing to inform you that RCN Scotland does not support the Bill and believes it should not proceed beyond stage 1.

As we stated in our stage 1 evidence, RCN Scotland shares the Scottish government's desire to improve the quality and consistency of social care and community health services across Scotland. While we agree with the overall aim of the legislation, it is entirely unclear how the Bill will achieve this objective or address the serious challenges within a sector that is in crisis. Last February we wrote to the Minister and Committee, adding our voice to the growing call from stakeholders for the legislation to be paused. We called for the Scottish government to take time to engage with stakeholders - including staff working at all levels within the social care and community health sectors - and develop detailed plans for reform prior to taking forward primary legislation.

While the Scottish government listened to these calls for a pause, and has since conducted further engagement exercises, we have concerns around the Scottish government's approach to co-design and the extent to which this is informing the Bill in a meaningful way. Given that the deadline for stage 1 remains the end of this month, we are very concerned that the Scottish government has not yet produced a detailed plan for reform. Indeed, the Scottish government's letter to the Committee on 6 December fails to set out detailed information about how the NCS will function and how it will improve the quality and consistency of services. We are now even less clear about the scope of the NCS and what types of services will be covered. What the letter does make clear is the

extent to which the Bill needs to be amended to take forward the Scottish Government's current plans. Key provisions within the Bill are no longer relevant and key parts of the current plans are not covered by the Bill.

We agree that reform is needed; the sector is in crisis and there is a need for urgent action to tackle serious issues around workforce shortages and access to services in a sustainable way. However, we previously raised concerns that the Bill is being taken forward without a clear understanding of how to fix the current problems facing the sector or enough planning to ensure the effective functioning of an NCS. In our view this remains a real risk and we are extremely concerned that pushing ahead with the current Bill will deepen the crisis within the sector. Given the importance of getting these reforms right, RCN Scotland cannot support this legislative approach.

We are aware that the Minister has made clear that the Scottish Government will not withdraw the Bill. If the Bill does progress beyond stage 1, RCN Scotland will continue to engage to ensure that nursing issues across the sector are central to reform and the development of new approaches to social care. This is vital for ensuring that those using services receive care that is high quality, safe and appropriate for their needs.

We would be happy to meet with you to discuss these issues further if that would be helpful.

Yours sincerely



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