Dear Cabinet Secretary,

**Penrose Inquiry report – progress update**

Thank you for giving evidence to the Health and Sport Committee on 9 February on the Penrose Inquiry Report – progress update. The Committee has considered the evidence received from you as well as Haemophilia Scotland, the Hepatitis C Trust and the Scottish Infected Blood Forum.

At the meeting the Committee heard about the report of the Contaminated Blood Financial Support Review Group. We welcome the findings from this report and commend them to you.

The Committee agrees with you that it is important that people infected or affected by Hepatitis C from contaminated blood should receive financial support as quickly as possible. We acknowledge the steps you are taking to seek a delivery mechanism for the Scottish Government’s financial support. We would however welcome further information from you, before dissolution, as to whether you have been reassured that the recent UK Government announcement on a consultation on reforming UK financial support will not hold up the progress of your discussions with UK Ministers about that delivery mechanism.

In terms of the report of the Financial Support review Group, we particularly highlight the recommendation that Stage 1 and Stage 2 of the Skipton Fund should be the subject of specific, evidence based review to create a new criteria based on health impact, rather than focusing on predominantly on liver damage. We heard from witnesses about the impact on financial support of being determined to fall within in Stage 1 rather than Stage 2 and how the complexities of the Hepatitis C mean that this distinction does not reflect its impact on people’s actual health. We agree with...
witnesses that a much more nuanced approach to supporting people should be developed which focuses on the impact of Hepatitis C on them and their families.

In that regard we also note the evidence we received about the long lasting and significant impact of extra hepatic conditions on people’s health and wellbeing. We believe that any future financial arrangement should recognise that these conditions can impact on people’s health sometimes long after the Hepatitis C virus has been treated.

We would also commend to you the recommendations in the report of the Financial Support Review Group which propose providing financial support to widows and widowers. We heard moving testimony of the long term and devastating impact of Hepatitis C on this group of affected people.

Finally we would welcome a copy of the short term working group report on the look back exercise.

Yours sincerely,

Duncan McNeil MSP
Convener to the Health and Sport Committee