I am a high school teacher and a member of the Cross Party Parliamentary Group on Commercial Sexual Exploitation. As such I am concerned about children and young people and their health and well-being and also with vulnerable women and girls.

I have serious concerns about third sector organisations use of funding to dominate policy making without public or parliamentary scrutiny. As a result women’s and girls’ sex based rights, as defined in the Equality Act 2010, have been systematically undermined by many third sector organisations who are supposed to be working in the field of women’s rights, as well as by those organisations working on LGBT rights. Single sex exemptions and women’s safe spaces based on ‘sex’ have been dismantled in many areas instead of lawfully upheld.

Funded organisations have absorbed an unscientific ideology regarding the existence of an innate gender identity. This is also undefined in law. Council staff and schools across Scotland have been ‘trained’ in this ideology without any form of risk assessment, equality impact assessments, public or parliamentary debate having been completed. I have made Freedom of Information requests to councils across Scotland. The responses showed that organisation which have policies of self-identification receive thousands of pounds of public money to deliver ‘training’. LGBT Youth Scotland produced a school’s guidance which I believe ignored protections required for girls and compounded issues of consent for both boys and girls. A Children’s Rights Impact Assessment published in January by Women and Girls in Scotland found that a possible eleven children’s rights were affected in that school’s guidance. How have lobby groups had such influence on policies in schools without parental or public knowledge? The safeguarding and protections that children deserve, and are legally entitled to, have been ignored.

Funded organisations have not consulted with nor therefore represented the communities they serve. They have not undertaken Equality Impact Assessments which is part of their public duty. They have not been accountable or transparent.

The third sector and the government must consider the evidence for policy capture as researched by Dr Kath Murray and Lucy Hunter Blackburn in their paper on the ‘unregulated introduction of gender self identification’, linked here. Major policies have been written for the public sector without the scrutiny the public deserves.

‘Gender identity’ is not a protected characteristic; ‘sex’ and ‘gender reassignment’ are. Woman and girls continue to face discrimination, prejudice and violence based on their sex. Moves to legalise extreme sexual exploitation in the form of prostitution

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and moves to purchase the use of women’s bodies through changes in surrogacy laws serve to further undermine the rights of women.

The third sector must uphold all rights and understand that, where conflict occurs, these require democratic solutions that are transparent and open. Grassroots women’s groups have now formed as a result, and for more than a year much unpaid work has had to be done by women in order to uphold their own lawful sex based rights, myself included. This should be an embarrassment to the current government and third sector organisations. Funding should now be removed from some and redirected to these organisations.

There must be funded organisations that understand women’s lived experiences which include increasing levels of poverty and inequality, discrimination in the workplace, unequal pay, issues with employment in pregnancy and maternity rights, the burden of care, sexual harassment, prostitution and exploitation, etc. understanding that these are all due to a woman’s sex, not gender identity.

Decisions regarding the distribution of public funds, and to what purpose, to the third sector must be transparent and accountable. An investigation should now take place as to how public money has been and is still being used to undermine women and girls’ sex based rights by public sector bodies.