



Petitions Committee

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Rt Hon Oliver Dowden CBE MP
Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport
Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport
100 Parliament Street
London
SW1A 2BQ

15 May 2020

Dear Oliver

Thank you for providing a revised response to e-petition 301461, which called on the Government to require British Sign Language (BSL) interpreters for emergency announcements on TV.

My Committee has agreed that the revised response does now meet the standards that have been agreed between the Committee and the Leader of the House, so we will send this to signatories to this petition. However, I know petitioners will be hugely disappointed that the Government does not intend to provide BSL interpreters for vital Covid19 announcements.

Whilst I appreciate your setting out of the practical challenges to providing this, as well as how you are working with broadcasters, I and the petitioners believe these are challenges which the Government should be seeking to overcome so that BSL users have the same access to the Government's important announcements at source, rather than relying on broadcasters' discretion.

The Scottish Government have sign language interpretation at their daily press conferences and petitioners believe the UK Government should be striving to meet the same standard.

I noted with interest that you said the Government will continue to engage with broadcasters about including signing provisions in future announcements to ensure that information is accessible in the absence of this being provided for by the UK Government directly. Given our keen interest in this area, I would be grateful if you could keep the Committee updated on any progress in this regard, so that we can bring this to the attention of petitioners.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Catherine". The script is cursive and fluid, with a large initial 'C'.

Catherine McKinnell MP
Chair of the Petitions Committee