



## Petitions Committee

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Rt Hon Kwasi Kwarteng MP  
Secretary of State  
Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy

24 May 2022

Dear Secretary of State,

I'm writing to ask for more information on how the Government intends to deliver on its commitments to extend the employment rights of new parents, in the absence of an Employment Bill from this month's Queen's Speech.

In 2020, the Petitions Committee held an inquiry into the impact of covid-19 on expectant and new parents. We heard about the challenges many new parents in employment face when their baby is born or when they adopt, and also when returning to work after parental leave. During that inquiry, the Minister for Small Business, Consumers and Labour Markets told us that the Government would take steps to help address these challenges—namely, extending statutory redundancy protections for new and expectant mothers into the period after they return to work, and introducing entitlements to leave and pay for parents of babies receiving neonatal care—in a future Employment Bill.

Following that inquiry, both our initial July 2020 [report](#) and our follow-up October 2021 [report](#) recommended the Government should legislate as soon as possible to introduce extended redundancy protections for new and expectant mothers. Our 2021 report also recommended that, if parliamentary time could not be found to consider a full Employment Bill, then the Government should bring forward a standalone Bill specifically to make this change. The Government's response in both cases was to restate its commitment to enacting this change "as soon as parliamentary time allows". The Government has likewise continued to repeat its commitment to bring forward legislation to introduce neonatal leave and pay "when parliamentary time allows".

However, it remains unclear how and when the Government will fulfil these commitments, given the continued absence of either a full Employment Bill or standalone legislation to implement these measures. These measures are long overdue, and it is vital that parents are able to benefit from them as quickly as possible.

Please could you therefore clarify what your plans are to introduce these changes—by what mechanism, and in what timeframe?

I would be grateful to receive your reply by Thursday 16 June.

Yours sincerely,

**Catherine McKinnell MP**  
Chair of the Petitions Committee