



Sir Bob Neill MP  
Chair, Justice Select Committee  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

28<sup>th</sup> November 2023

Dear Sir,

### VICTIMS AND PRISONERS BILL: PAROLE AND IMPRISONMENT FOR PUBLIC PROTECTION

I am writing to inform you of amendments the government has tabled to Part 3 of the Victims and Prisoners Bill that seek to amend the parole process and make changes for prisoners serving Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP) sentences.

In summary, the changes we are proposing to parole will still enable ministers to intervene in the release of serious offenders, such as murderers or rapists. However, instead of retaking the parole decision themselves, ministers will be able to refer cases directly to the Upper Tribunal to decide on. Our amendments also make clear that this power will apply only to those cases that might particularly affect public confidence and where the Upper Tribunal might reach a different conclusion to the Parole Board. The government will publish guidance on how this power will be applied in due course. We are also tabling an amendment to remove the provisions that would enable the Parole Board to refer a case to the Justice Secretary of its own volition.

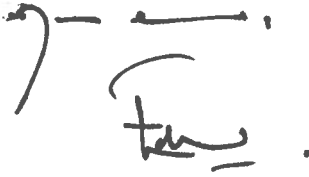
On IPP, I am pleased to confirm that we are amending the Bill to introduce new measures that will:

- a. reduce the qualifying period that triggers the duty of the Secretary of State to refer an IPP licence to the Parole Board for termination from ten years to three years;
- b. include a clear statutory presumption that the IPP licence will be terminated by the Parole Board at the end of the three-year qualifying period;
- c. introduce a provision that will automatically terminate the IPP licence two years after the three-year qualifying period in cases where the Parole Board has not terminated the licence; and
- d. introduce a power to amend the qualifying period by Statutory Instrument.

Your committee's report on IPP Sentences in September last year provided a valuable opportunity to take stock and identify areas for improvement and we have considered your recommendations carefully. We have been particularly persuaded by the recommendation to reduce the qualifying licence period from 10 years to five years, and we are going further: reducing the period to three years. These amendments will restore greater proportionality to IPP sentences by reducing the qualifying period to three years and providing a clear pathway to a definitive end to the licence and, therefore, the sentence.

The parole and IPP amendments will be considered on 4 December when the Bill has its Report stage in the House of Commons.

Thank you again for raising these important issues; I trust that your committee will welcome the changes the government proposes to make to the Bill.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Edward Argar', with a horizontal line underneath the name.

**RT HON EDWARD ARGAR MP**