



Women and Equalities Committee

House of Commons London SW1A 0AA

Tel 020 7219 6123 Email womeqcom@parliament.uk Website www.parliament.uk

From the Chair

Kemi Badenoch MP
Minister for Equalities and Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury
Government Equalities Office
Correspondence via email

1 June 2021

Dear Kemi,

Re: Invitation to give oral evidence on the Reform of the Gender Recognition Act

My Committee and I were very disappointed to receive your letter on 21 May, in which you suggest postponing your attendance to give evidence to our inquiry into the Reform of the Gender Recognition Act. We ask you to reconsider our request to appear before the Committee in June, and I have set out our reasoning for asking this below.

Our evidence session will be taking place on 16 June, and we have confirmed the attendance of Jo Churchill, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Prevention, Public Health and Primary Care, Baroness Kishwer Falkner, Chair of the EHRC, and Melanie Field, Executive Director of Policy and Strategy at the EHRC. We believe it is important that the GEO is represented on this panel, given its centrality to the issues we intend to discuss.

Whilst you state that you “would not be able to impart any additional information as part of your inquiry”, you will appreciate that the purpose of this Committee is to scrutinise the work of the Government Equalities Office and hold it to account on equality law and policy. A committee session also provides a different forum for debate and discussion than the Statement given by the Minister for Women and Equalities referenced in your letter. Our inquiry has considered a number of issues referenced in that Statement, since which 35 weeks have passed and there have been several policy developments.

The session will also provide an opportunity to discuss these developments, such as the measures you are bringing forward to place the GRC process online and reduce the application fee to £5. Furthermore, as the Government Equalities Office has chosen not to bring forward proposals to reform certain parts of the Gender Recognition Act, despite there being support for this in the consultation response, this Committee would like to understand the rationale behind your decisions.

We appreciate that there is ongoing work in this area including the Cass Review, but as you note in your letter, the final report for the Cass Review will not be produced until next year and we intend to conclude our inquiry in the next few months. Furthermore, whilst we are interested in the findings of the Cass Review, this inquiry has not focused on the particular issues that that review touches upon.

I have already expressed my concern about the approach being taken by GEO Ministers to my Committee in the letter dated 28 April, especially in relation to ministerial attendance at our evidence sessions. It is important for this Committee to scrutinise Ministers work, especially in areas where our stakeholders have concerns. You may be aware that on 19



Women and Equalities Committee

House of Commons London SW1A 0AA

Tel 020 7219 6123 Email womeqcom@parliament.uk Website www.parliament.uk

From the Chair

May we heard from former members of the LGBT Advisory Panel, who stated that the Government was creating a 'hostile environment' for LGBT people in the UK. We are concerned that an unwillingness to attend on the part of GEO Ministers will compound that perception.

We would urge you to reconsider our invitation to attend on 16 June, to demonstrate your commitment to the issues we intend to discuss. I would be grateful for your response to this letter and our invitation by 7 June.

I am copying in the Minister for Women and Equalities, to whom our invitation was initially issued before being redirected.

In accordance with our usual practice, this letter will be published on the Committee's webpage.

Regards,

Rt Hon Caroline Nokes MP
Chair, Women and Equalities Committee