

Peter Hall  
Committee Clerk  
Economy Committee  
Room 347, Parliament Buildings,  
Ballymiscaw, Stormont,  
Belfast, BT4 3XX



**Re: Safe Leave Bill – Financial Costs**

Dear Peter,

24<sup>th</sup> January 2022

Further to our conversation earlier today, I am writing to you with regard to my Private Member's Bill on Domestic Abuse (Safe Leave), to add a point of clarity on the financial costs ahead of the Committee's final deliberations and publication of their report.

On 15<sup>th</sup> December 2021, the Committee received a briefing from RaISe in which the financial implications of the Bill were discussed. I would like to bring to the Committee's attention, that the estimated costs provided by the Department were based on predictions of what the Bill's provisions would include and not the actual provisions of the Bill as introduced to the Assembly.

The key difference is the issue of employers being able to 'claim back' the costs of Safe Leave. As noted in the research paper, NIAR 169-21, the Department's estimates of potential costs (ranging from circa £10k to £10m) were based on the assumption that "in line with other entitlements to paid statutory leave...the new legislation...would allow provision to be made for employers to reclaim payments from HMRC".

When developing the Bill, I did consider such a publicly funded model. However, it became clear that this was not possible to achieve through Private Member's legislation and ultimately the Bill was drafted so that the costs of Safe Leave will be incurred by the employer. This is the same model that has been implemented in other jurisdictions, such as New Zealand.

As such, the estimated costs that were provided to the Committee are now outdated. Once again, I would welcome the Committee's support for the Bill as drafted, and I am happy to provide any further clarity if required.

Yours sincerely,

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