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Dear Justice Committee Chair,

I wanted to make the Committee aware of the outcome of Report Stage of the Nationality and Borders Bill at Westminster which happened on Wednesday 8th December 2021 as you consider the potential for longer-term support for confirmed victims of modern slavery.

The Minister, in response to amendment NC47 tabled by Sir Iain Duncan Smith, based on Lord McColl's Modern Slavery (Victim Support) Bill,¹ has provided "*an assurance that all those who receive a positive conclusive grounds decision and are in need of tailored support will receive appropriate individualised support for a minimum of 12 months and we will set out further details in relevant guidance.*"² Notably, due to support being a devolved matter, this commitment to extend support will only apply to England and Wales.

It is an encouraging first step and recognition from the Government that the Bill as it stands, does not do enough to support confirmed victims of modern slavery.

However, leaving something so crucial to victim recovery to Guidance, in our view, does not go far enough to provide the security and stability confirmed victims of modern slavery deserve from legislation. Unless this assurance is subsequently made on the face of the Bill, there is still a long way to go in ensuring the provision of long-term support, and leave to remain, which evidence has shown is vital to both a victim's recovery and engagement with police.

Northern Ireland, therefore, continues to be in a unique position to lead the way and act as a catalyst for change by extending the current 'discretionary' support to 12 months statutory support. This extension could be provided for under Section 18(9) of the Human Trafficking (Exploitation and Support for Victims) Act 2015, as per our proposed Amendment 1 in our Committee Evidence. If the Bill is passed without some recognition of the longer terms needs of victims, Northern Ireland will be significantly far behind England and Wales.

We hope this information is helpful for the Committee. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can be of further assistance.

Yours sincerely,

Lauren Agnew

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¹ <https://bills.parliament.uk/publications/44029/documents/1058>

² <https://hansard.parliament.uk/pdf/commons/2021-12-08>, col 427