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Colm Gildernew MLA
Chairperson, Committee for Communities
Room 430
Parliament Buildings
Belfast
BT4 3XX

Dear Colm

THE SOCIAL SECURITY AND STATUTORY MATERNITY PAY (EVIDENCE OF PREGNANCY) (AMENDMENT) REGULATIONS (NORTHERN IRELAND) 2026

I am writing to you in accordance with paragraphs 19 and 20 of the Guidance for Departments on Delegated Legislation (SL1 Pre-introductory Stage) (November 2025) ('the Guidance') to request that the Committee consider the SL1 for this Statutory Rule (SR) in a shortened timeframe.

In addition, as DWP have not yet finalised their Statutory Instrument (SI), it is not possible to share a draft of the SR and Explanatory Memorandum with the Committee alongside the SL1 as envisaged under the Guidance.

The SR is a parity social security measure. In order to align with the timescale for the corresponding SI being brought forward by the DWP in GB, the normal timelines and processes under the Guidance cannot be applied.

The SR will make a technical change which will have a positive impact for those claiming maternity payments as detailed in the SL1 letter. The SR, whilst supporting the development of the digital Maternity Allowance service, also provides for the acceptance of copy maternity certificates for paper-based claims.

The latest information my officials have received from DWP is that they intend to make the corresponding SI on 3 March 2026 to be operational from 1 April 2026.

My officials are working to develop the NI SR, informed by DWP drafting of the corresponding SI. It is not anticipated that the final draft SR will diverge from the policy proposals as detailed in the SL1. However, should there be any significant last-minute changes, a revised SL1 will be provided to the Committee.

I am satisfied that ensuring the orderly making of this parity social security legislation in line with DWP timeframes gives rise to exceptional circumstances which require deviation from the normal process and timeframes set out in the Guidance.

I would be grateful if the Committee would agree to approve the SL1 in the requested shortened timeframe in light of these exceptional circumstances.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gordon Lyons', written in a cursive style.

Gordon Lyons MLA

Minister for Communities