



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Jenni Minto MSP
Minister for Public Health and
Women's Health

Via email only

Health, Social Care and Sport Committee
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20 March 2024

Dear Minister,

Health, Social Care and Sport Committee Stage 1 scrutiny: Abortion Services (Safe Access Zones) (Scotland) Bill

I am writing to thank you for your evidence to the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee meeting on Tuesday, 19 March 2024, as part of the Committee's Stage 1 scrutiny of the Abortion Services (Safe Access Zones) (Scotland) Bill.

Official Report and recordings of the session

- The official report of the session will be published [here](#) once available.
- The recording of the session is now available on [Scottish Parliament TV](#).

During that session, you committed to writing to the Committee to provide further clarification on the following issues:

Silent prayer

Superintendent Gerry Corrigan from Police Scotland set out his view of the anticipated operational management of the offences in the Bill during evidence on 5 March 2024. The Committee has written to Police Scotland for further details of how they would expect to manage and investigate incidents of silent prayer outside of abortion services. During your evidence you noted that you envisaged that the context of a particular situation would inform operational management, and this would be a matter for Police Scotland. Nevertheless, you agreed to provide the Committee with an example of how policing of silent prayer might work in practice.

Religious buildings

The Committee discussed private premises and religious buildings that may be situated within safe access zones. You noted that anything that could impact, i.e. be heard or seen from a safe access zone, would be captured under the offences in the Bill. Members specifically asked you about whether signage outside religious buildings, or religious hymns that could be heard or seen within the safe access zone, would be included under the offences set out in the Bill? You mentioned that there would need to be a judgement on what would constitute a behaviour as set out in the Bill, and that there would need to be intent to influence someone accessing abortion services. You agreed to provide more information to the Committee as clarification.

Extension and reduction of safe access zones

The Committee discussed procedures for the possible extension and reduction of safe access zones, and in particular, why the Bill does not provide for additional parliamentary scrutiny of these provisions, in the form of delegated powers. You set out the Scottish Government's intention to consult on extensions and reductions of safe access zones and the need to react quickly if circumstances around the provision of abortion services change in the future. In this instance, the Committee would be grateful to receive more detail concerning indicative timescales for anticipated consultation in this instance, and an explanation of how this would differ from indicative timescales for consultation and additional parliamentary scrutiny through subordinate legislation.

Deadline for response

To enable the Committee to continue to progress its Stage 1 scrutiny of the Bill in a timely manner, I would request that you provide this information to the Committee **no later than 5pm on Tuesday, 26 March 2024**.

Yours sincerely,



Clare Haughey MSP
Convener, Health, Social Care and Sport Committee