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Dear Convener,

As you are aware, earlier today I provided a statement to Parliament updating on the progress we have made on reform of the Scottish education and skills landscape following my June statement.

It is essential that the formation of our education and skills bodies is informed by views from people across the education and skills system, and that we can draw on consideration of the recent independent education and skills reviews and publications. For that reason, I announced the publication of a consultation on the provisions of the Education Bill. I attach a copy of the consultation document to this letter.

This consultation was published today to coincide with my statement. It will run for six weeks and will close on 18 December 2023. The consultation is available on the Scottish Government's consultation hub, Citizen Space, via the following link:  
<https://consult.gov.scot/education-reform/new-qualification-body-and-approach-to-inspection>.

This consultation will provide us with a further opportunity to engage on the detail of the proposals and the targeted engagement that has shaped them. The timeframe will also ensure we can meet the current timetable for introducing the Bill. Its findings will build on the substantial engagement already undertaken across all the reports throughout this reform period, beginning with the OECD Report in 2021, Professor Muir's Report in March 2022 and the subsequent independent reviews earlier this year.

The consultation paper specifically focuses on the new qualifications body and new approaches to inspection. Building on all the work and engagement to date, we have developed a number of proposals as to how we could establish a new qualifications body and the ways in which we could maximise the positive impact of inspection.

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The overarching policy objective of establishing a new qualifications body is to ensure that qualifications consistently meet the needs and expectations of their users, the education system, economy, industry and other providers who use and recognise qualifications and awards. A key priority for the new body is that it will involve pupils and students, teachers and practitioners, and wider stakeholders in its decision making. It will be accountable to and transparent with these stakeholders through robust governance and other arrangements.

On inspection, the intention is to strengthen the role inspection plays to ensure it secures accountability, provides assurance and drives improvement. This can be achieved in a number of ways and the consultation seeks views on whether legislation or non-legislative means are the best way to support this. My overarching aim is to ensure there is public confidence in the work of the inspectorate and that there is an appropriate level of involvement from across the education system. It is therefore intended that this part of the consultation seeks further views on the purpose and priorities for improvement of inspection; the establishments and services subject to inspection; and the different possible legislative and non-legislative reform measures to address priority issues within the system.

Any reform must recognise the changes in our classrooms since the pandemic, whether they be developmental delays, changed behaviour or on attendance. To improve outcomes for our young people and to better support our teaching professionals, I confirmed some changes to the governance process for the Education and Skills Reform Programme, announcing the establishment of an Education and Skills Reform Chief Executive Forum. I also set out the process to establish the Centre for Teaching Excellence, provided an update on the review of Regional Improvement Collaboratives, as well as announcing the [ICEA Third report publication](#) highlighting its focus on improving teaching and pedagogy.

I hope the enclosed is of interest to Committee members. Subject to Parliamentary agreement my intention would be to return to the Chamber in early 2024 to fully debate the Education Reform proposals, including the review by Professor Louise Hayward, with all parties.

As I said in my statement, I would be very happy to attend your committee to discuss any aspect of this further.

**JENNY GILRUTH**

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