

PETER GIBSON MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

January 2023

Dear Constituents

Thank you for your email about the Gender Recognition Act.

I am determined that everyone in the UK should be free to live their lives and fulfil their potential regardless of their sex, gender identity, race or disability. I am also clear that transgender people should be free to prosper in modern Britain. Furthermore, as someone who has championed Trans rights in Parliament, I fully understand your concerns.

I am encouraged that my colleagues in the Government Equalities Office have, over recent years, looked carefully and thoroughly into the gender recognition process, including considering potential changes to the Gender Recognition Act 2004. After careful consideration, it is their view that this existing legislation strikes the right balance between ensuring there are proper checks and balances in the system and ensuring there is support in place for people who want to change their legal sex.

However, it was clear from the consultation that changes are needed to improve the process and experience transgender people have when applying for a Gender Recognition Certificate (GRC). When responding to the National LGBT survey, transgender people highlighted two key obstacles in the process: bureaucracy and cost. I am especially glad that these are being addressed, with the entire procedure moving online and the existing £140 fee being reduced to £5. This fee reduction is already in effect and I understand that the Government's Equality Hub is working at speed to move the application process online, with more details to be set out in due course. I know that the Government wants to ensure that applying for a GRC is as straightforward and dignified as possible, and I am confident these changes will make a noticeable difference to the transgender people who use the system.

I am aware that the announcement by the Secretary of State for Scotland which will prevent the Bill from proceeding to Royal Assent, is about the legislation's consequences for the operation of UK wide equalities protections and other reserved matters.

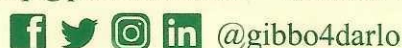
It is the assessment of the UK Government that the Bill will have significantly adverse effects, including the impact on the operation of the Equality Act 2010. In particular, the Government has said it shares the concerns of many experts and civil society groups regarding the potential impact of the Bill on the safety of women and children.

I can assure you that this decision has not been taken lightly, and the UK Government fully respects the Scottish Parliament's competency to make decisions within devolved areas but it cannot ignore the significant constitutional consequences of this Bill for reserved areas.

Member of Parliament for Darlington

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Together with my colleagues in government, I want every individual, regardless of their sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity to have the confidence and the freedom to be themselves.

I also want to take the opportunity to assure you that I take the issue of LGBTQ+ rights very seriously and have worked with a team of Conservative MPs on this since arriving in Parliament. I am positive about the steps that have been made so far in the UK to achieve LGBTQ+ equality and am confident that this good work will continue under this Government. As a member of the LBGT community, I personally am committed to seeing all forms of abuse for LGBTQ+ people banned and will continue to work towards that in Parliament.

Once again, thank you for taking the time to contact me and if I can ever be of any further assistance to you then please do not hesitate to contact me again. If you would like to keep up to date with my activities as your Member of Parliament then please subscribe to my Darlington Matters newsletter using this link: www.petergibson.org/signup

Yours Sincerely
Peter Gibson

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