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Dear Lewis

CORONAVIRUS (SCOTLAND) BILL 2020

I am writing to advise you that the Scottish Government has introduced the Coronavirus (Scotland) Bill into the Scottish Parliament today. I have enclosed links to the Bill and accompanying documentation which have been published.

The purpose of the Bill is to respond to the emergency situation caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. The Bill complements and supplements the Coronavirus Act 2020, passed by the UK Parliament on 25 March 2020, to which the Scottish Parliament consented on 24 March at the recommendation of the Scottish Government.

The Bill contains a range of provisions to deal with issues arising from the coronavirus outbreak and to ensure that our vital public services, including the NHS, can continue to operate most effectively in response to the pandemic. The Committee will have particular interest in the provisions taken within the Bill to amend the Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act to ensure the protection of vulnerable adults is maintained during this crisis.

The majority of measures in the Bill will automatically expire six months after coming into force. They may, by regulations, be extended for two further periods of six months, giving the measures in the Bill a maximum duration of 18 months. The Scottish Ministers are required by the Bill to report on the continued need for the measures, and on the use of powers in the Bill, every two months.

With the Parliament's consent, all stages of the Bill will be considered on 1 April. The decision to progress this Bill as emergency legislation has been taken as a consequence of the Scottish Government's responsibility to protect human health and life, and the consequential necessity of the need for social distancing and restrictions on normal social and civic activity in order to minimise the loss of life at this time.

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In developing this Bill I have had constructive discussions with leaders and representatives of all parties in the Scottish Parliament and look forward to your committee's contributions to scrutiny of this crucial piece of legislation in our efforts to respond to the public health emergency created by the coronavirus outbreak.

MICHAEL RUSSELL

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Links to Bill and accompanying documents

Coronavirus (Scotland) Bill:

<https://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/Bills/114929.aspx>

EQIA:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-scotland-bill-equality-impact-assessment/>

BRIA:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-scotland-bill-business-regulatory-impact-assessment/>

CRWIA:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-scotland-bill-child-rights-welfare-impact-assessment/>

FSD:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-scotland-bill-fairer-scotland-duty-assessment/>

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