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Lewis Macdonald MSP  
Convenor  
Health and Sport Committee

16 April 2020

Dear Lewis

Thank you for your letter of 24 March concerning the Committee's scrutiny of the Forensic Medical Services (Victims of Sexual Offences) (Scotland) Bill.

We have discussed this matter in the interim and you will be aware that I announced to the chamber on 1 April that the Bill is considered by the Government to be extremely important and necessary. In my statement I acknowledged the importance of Committees and Convenors in working collaboratively to overcome challenges relating to the COVID-19 pandemic. I stated that the Government was seeking to extend the Stage 1 deadline for the Bill and I can now confirm that, subject to your and the parliamentary authorities agreement, the Government would wish to see Stage 1 completed before the summer recess.

I note that the Committee proposes to reschedule the oral evidence sessions previously scheduled for 24 and 31 March. I am supportive of that and would wish to emphasise the Government does not wish to see any diminution of the Committee's scrutiny of the Bill. It is important that stakeholders who were due to give oral evidence are able to give that evidence to the Committee, perhaps by remote link, to inform a thorough Stage 1 report ahead of the Stage 1 debate.

You will appreciate that all Committees and Bills are affected to some degree by the pandemic and it is my intention to continue to keep all Convenors updated as matters develop.

Kind regards

**Graeme Dey MSP**  
Minister for Parliamentary Business and Veterans

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