

JUSTICE COMMITTEE

HATE CRIME AND PUBLIC ORDER (SCOTLAND) BILL

SUBMISSION FROM SARAH TAYLOR

In response to the request for feedback about this bill I have a few concerns over the wording of this bill, the potential for opening up to its use as an accusatory weapon and the overall need to balance a kind society with the protection of free speech. With the threat of any opinions on a variety of topics, said not with malicious intent but in the spirit of discussion, being reportable as a hate crime surely will turn our country into a narrow minded society if there is an underlying fear of criminal charges? Reform of existing legislation is different to bringing in more qualifying characteristics whilst taking away protections. There needs to be a serious consideration of how to sensibly legislate on the difference between essentially bullying of individuals and individual opinions held but not being directed towards specific people. I hope you will consider this issue carefully about putting in more protections to avoid malicious use of the bill and how to discuss this issue widely at this current time with free discussion and not risk a bill with major implications on freedom of speech flying under the radar

Sarah Taylor
21 July 2020