

Annex – FOI202000110153

Item 1

From: [redacted]

Sent: 21 September 2019 23:00

To: Todd M (Maree), MSP <Maree.Todd.msp@parliament.scot>

Subject: The Children (Equal Protection From Assault) (Scotland) Bill

Dear Ms Todd

I want to let you know that I do pray for you and all our elected representatives and wholeheartedly support our democratic process in Scotland. I think you do an amazing job and despite all the criticism levelled at politicians, I could not do what you do, so I really do appreciate your efforts. I am a Christian and a Scot who votes according to conscience. I believe it is my right and responsibility to do so.

I am writing to you in light of the upcoming final debate and vote on the above Bill set for 3rd October I believe. I am asking that you vote against this Bill. I have read and reviewed the Consultation document and am aware of the arguments for the Bill, but I feel that the whole tenor of the language used throughout this whole process and throughout the Consultation document at the very outset equates smacking with assault which creates an unfair and untrue bias in the matter.

The law as it stands already protects a child against assault. This Bill is seeking to redefine assault to a level that is, in my opinion, ridiculous. To equate a disciplinary measure amongst a host of others, such as a smack on the back of the hand or leg, with a violent attack is duplicitous. In effect, the lightest tap is being paralleled with a criminal assault on a child.

In actual fact, at a recent event involving S5 and S6 pupils from our local school, at which the topic *The Smacking Bill: Fair, Flawed or Foolish?* was discussed and debated, not one pupil thought the Bill was fair and all thought it was at very best flawed and probably in reality foolish!

To say that the law should be the same for children as for adults will undoubtedly result in it becoming a criminal act to ground a child or remove a game from them on the basis that it becomes false imprisonment or theft!! Where will it end?

It is also interesting that apparently a ComRes poll in 2017 found that 74% of Scottish adults were against criminalising smacking while only 14% were in favour. I wonder if there has been a shift since then? I do understand that the consultation attracted 660 responses. I am aware that organisations did respond who represent larger but in light of there being 600,000 households and circa 5 million people in Scotland, what kind of representational response is that really?

My plea to you is that you vote against the Bill as one of my list MSP's.

Best regards

[Redacted]
Item 2

Subject: FW: Smacking Bill

From: [Redacted]

Sent: 30 September 2019 10:49

To: [Redacted]

Subject: Smacking Bill

Could I please ask you to consider seriously as to whether smacking a child is a criminal offence. I believe very strongly that the decision as to whether to discipline a child by smacking is that of the parent, not the Government. In my opinion this is an unnecessary intrusion by the state into family life.

I was delighted recently to see the Named Person scheme scrapped and would like to

see this latest intrusion go the same way.

The existing law already criminalises parents who use unreasonable chastisement and

I fully support this but please allow loving parents to discipline parents as they see fit.

If you do support the Bill then at the very least I would ask that parents who smack are not prosecuted and an alternative to the criminal justice system is considered.

Thank you for taking the time to read this email.

Regards

[Redacted]

Item 3

From: [Redacted]

Sent: 03 October 2019 10:28

To: Todd M (Maree), MSP <Maree.Todd.msp@parliament.scot>

Subject: Anti-smacking legislation

Dear Maree,

As a resident of [redacted] I appeal to you to vote AGAINST the proposed anti-smacking legislation. While well-meaning I believe it is mis-guided and will result in an unnecessary burden on our policing and legal system without improving the situation. What is needed is parenting education and evidence based information that convinces parents that alternatives to smacking are more effective. Criminalising everyday average parents will not help eradicate poor or abusive parenting that can only be addressed through effective education, starting in schools. We are so keen these days on liberal sex education but we neglect to educate about the more mundane but equally important topics of parenting and running a household.

Please vote against this anti-smacking proposal and seek more effective alternatives.

Yours sincerely,

[Redacted]

Item 4

From: [Redacted]

Sent: 03 October 2019 14:20

To: Todd M (Maree), MSP <Maree.Todd.msp@parliament.scot>

Subject: Final vote on Children (Equal Protection from Assault) (Scotland) Bill

Dear Maree Todd,

I write in connection with the final vote on the Children (Equal Protection from Assault) (Scotland) Bill which is due to take place today (Thursday) in the Scottish Parliament.

I urge you to vote against this Bill and to support any amendments which may be proposed to mitigate the effects of the legislation should it become law. My reasons are as follows:

1. The use of reasonable chastisement, in the form of a mild physical punishment such as a smack, is one of the means which God has given to parents whereby they are able to discipline their children when they are disobedient, for their good. The state has no authority to deprive parents of this right.
2. Probably most MSPs received some form of physical correction from their parents when they were young, and will acknowledge that it was done for their good and helped to keep them out of mischief and danger. If that is so, then why should parents today be forbidden to exercise their God-given right to do the same, out of love for their own children?
3. To represent the parental punishment of children as though it was akin to a violent attack by one adult upon another is absurd: children are not adults and smacking is not assault. The existing law, which forbids the excessive physical punishment of children, is perfectly adequate.
4. If the Bill becomes law, it would have the effect of turning parents who use appropriate physical chastisement in training their children from law-abiding citizens into criminals overnight. Meanwhile thousands of children are killed every year in Scotland by abortion and the Scottish Parliament does nothing to prevent it!
5. Once again we see politicians intruding into matters which do not properly belong to them. Parents have the ultimate responsibility for their children and the state should only interfere in the family when there is clear evidence of actual assault or abuse taking place.

Thanking you for your attention.

Kind regards,

Yours sincerely,
[Redacted]
Item 5

From: [Redacted]
Sent: 03 October 2019 17:26
To: Scottish Ministers <Scottish_Ministers@gov.scot>
Subject: How do i report child assaults?

Hi Mr Humza our Justice secretary can you please contact me by email, letter, or phone, i really need some Scottish justice advice you have now passed a law banning smacking children which will now be seen as a serious assault on a child, so when in the street now and i witness a parent smacking the wrist of a child who was ignoring the parents advice and was jumping in front of vehicles that is now a serious assault on a child who do i contact regarding this at the time??? DO I CALL 999 SAYING I'VE JUST WITNESSED A SERIOUS ASSAULT ON A CHILD??? JUST AS I WOULD DO WHEN I SEE A SERIOUS ASSAULT BY 2 ADULTS IN THE STREET??? need some advice please thank you.

[Redacted]

Item 6

From: [Redacted]
Sent: 04 October 2019 12:48
To: Scottish Ministers <Scottish_Ministers@gov.scot>
Subject: Equal Protection from Assault bill

Hello Minister, It is very pleasing to see the Scottish Parliament reach a mile stone this week with the passing of the 'Equal Protection from Assault' bill. Having argued for many years that it is the removal of the cause, the lack of parental skills, that will be the real accomplishment and so I am also pleased to see already the calls for provision to tackle this lack of skill by providing parenting classes, however it is concerning to see term such as 'they can access help and support if they need it' as this begins to suggest that there is a category of parents that need help and the rest do not. It is vital that the provision of parenting skills classes are promoted across all the community, it is very unlikely that there is any parent, who if being honest, would not admit to wishing they had some more insight and understanding of the task of helping their children to grow and develop. An anonymous pole of the well adjusted intelligent community of parent collogues at Holyrood might prove informative. Making provision community wide will remove the stigma associated with 'targeted' provision and puts the information in the hands of all parents, leading to good practise by those who can adopt it readily acting as a natural catalyst for those who do not, peer influence. Having followed the example of Finland in introducing 'Baby Boxes' it would also be appropriate to follow their example and relate that provision to taking classes in parenting. Not all parents take up the provision there but there introduction is credited with a marked change in that nations educational attainment, presumably because as they develop young people remain engaged rather than in conflict with their communities efforts to see them develop to their full potential.

These and other social intervention reasons mean that such provision across the board needs to be assessed in broad terms of savings, rather than a short term cost. Speaking from our own parenting experience having sought out classes early on, no they didn't make us perfect parent, but yes they did provide some invaluable insights which helped along the way. I like to think of it as a spaceship leaving on a long journey, being off course by one degree at this end may not seem very significant, but it certainly affects where it ends up. Wishing you well in your task, [Redacted]

Item 7

[Redacted]

12 October, 2019

The First Minister,
THE SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT,

Dear Madam,

It was good to see the Named Guardian proposals being dropped. Brute force and common sense at last. As usual, you must take great delight and consolation in being first to ban smacking. Instead of striving to be first in a number of trivial projects and point scoring, serious attention should be given to the more difficult jobs i.e. looking after our economy, improving the health service, education, police etc. There was a time when we had the best education in the world - what happened? It's more about dumbing down/changing names, to increase success rates and less about decreasing red tape for teachers and enabling them to do a better job in the classroom. These are the people who will then have time to notice who needs extra care and attention. A long time ago, when I was at school, it was the teacher (one for almost 40 pupils), who highlighted a problem, discussed with Head Teacher and Heath Visitor/Social Work then responded when necessary. Simple!

Children and adults now have more free products than has ever been known. Someone has to pay at the end of the day. If a child is living in poverty which is ridiculous in this day and age, their parent should be given guidance, instruction and support. It started with breakfast for some/all. Now it's meals throughout the year as it may be the only hot food these children get. Who are these parents? You said it so you must know. What are they doing with the money they get? If they're not working, they have time to prepare economical and nutritious food. It's up to you to sort it rather than making everything free without any responsibility. They should be part of a parenting programme or something and non participants lose their free products. Your attitude of providing for all in case children are stigmatised is completely wrong and a system to avoid the problem could be readily implemented.

As for your free university fees - shame on you! We are British NOT European. It is a very sad day when we cannot include people from all points in the "United Kingdom" whilst at the same time, cannot get enough foreign visitors who reap the benefits and then go home. Perhaps there should be a little encouragement to stay and work awhile after qualification perhaps?

The thinking of this Government is more than skewed and unfortunately, the sensible people of Scotland have just to put up with it - for the moment anyway. Hopefully, real life is catching up very soon.

[Redacted]

Item 8

-----Original Message-----

From: [Redacted]

Sent: 14 October 2019 21:07

To: Scottish Ministers <Scottish_Ministers@gov.scot>

Subject: Smacking of children

Dear Minister, I know that protecting children is paramount and smacking of youngsters can in many ways get out of hand but, we are now in a situation whereby unruly kids now know that , parents, teachers and police have no powers of chastisement (an example in Dundee this week), where kids caused havoc in a pet store , even spitting on staff !! .

All this (goody, goody) is causing no end of problems for everyone and will only get

Worse as we will have no dicipline or respect for others, even adults just get a minimal sentence for quite serious crimes !! SO, no chastisement or deterrent for bad behaviour or crimes just leads to a very poor society and quality of life for law abiding citizens , also not good for visitors to our country. Respectfully yours,
[Redacted]

Item 9

From: [Redacted]

Sent: 23 October 2019 17:44

To: Todd M (Maree), MSP <Maree.Todd.msp@parliament.scot>

Subject: University Project

Good Evening,

I'm [redacted] an [redacted] student of [redacted] of the University of [redacted]. This semester I'm studying at the University of [redacted] and for a university project I have to analyze the new Scottish law that bans smacking children.

I'm interested in your opinions about the argument so if you could answer these questions, or even to just one of them, I would be very pleased.

- Do you think that physical punishment, in the form of smacking, is an effective tool for discipline and teaching the rules?
- A lot of opinions against the law claim that discipline is a family matter, not a matter for state interference. What do you think about?
- What do you think are the main advantages of giving children equal protection from assault by prohibiting all physical punishment of children?

- What do you think are the main disadvantages of giving children equal protection from assault by prohibiting all physical punishment of children?

Thank you in advance for your valuable time and your precious help.

Best regards.

[Redacted]

Item 10

From: [Redacted]

Sent: 04 December 2019 14:52

To: Scottish Ministers <Scottish_Ministers@gov.scot>

Subject: for attention of Maree Todd, MSP

Dear Maree

I am a lecturer at [redacted] and today my [redacted] students were out in [redacted] shopping centre doing a survey on the general public on their views on the smacking ban. They have written and conducted the survey themselves and have collected nearly 100 answers from a wide range of public opinion.

I am asking them to put their findings into a report and would love to share it with you, in the hope you can send us a reply. This would be great for student confidence to know that their hard work has meant something in the bigger picture. They are getting together to gather their findings next Wednesday and could provide you with the information then, if it would be of some interest to you. I will also attach the survey.

Would so love to hear from you, thank you in advance.

Yours,

[Redacted]

Item 11

From: [Redacted]

Sent: 14 December 2019 20:37

To: Scottish Ministers <Scottish_Ministers@gov.scot>

Subject: Smacking ban

Hi,

Just back from holiday in [redacted]. There were a family sitting directly behind me. I take it there was mum dad and child about 5/6 years old.

Well he complained the whole flight about everything.

At one point he called his mum a F__k__ * Bas_____ because he wanted more sweets.

He had already had minstrels,crisps, coke ,KitKat and several other things ,mainly to try and appease him.

When he used that language towards him mum,she just said be quiet and I will give you what you want.

This went on for the duration of the flight.

If this continues throughout his young life,god knows what he will turn out to be.

No discipline,no direction,not knowing right from wrong.

No wonder there are so many ildisciplined teanagers.

No guidance,no direction.

They don,t even know if they would like to be a boy or girl or something else.

My parents taught me and my brother's right or wrong .

My son,s were taught right and wrong and we have 2 lovely,exceptional children,now successful adults.

I wonder what this child will turn out to become.

He certainly is getting no help from his parents..

As usual you swerve the real problem with dangerous adults,and ignore their behaviour and try and put them along with normal parenting.

Thanks,

[Redacted]