

Open letter to MPs from civil society infrastructure organisations ahead of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill returning to the Commons.

3 February 2022

Dear Member of Parliament,

We are writing as a coalition of civil society infrastructure bodies to express concerns about the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill (PCSCB). Together we represent over 2000 organisations. As the Bill returns to the Commons, we urge you to speak out against Parts 3 and 4 of the Bill and support changes made in the House of Lords that mitigate some of the worst impacts on the right to protest.

Throughout the Bill's progress through Parliament we have raised concerns about the impact on protests and democratic engagement as well as discriminatory proposals which over-criminalise marginalised communities. For our members, some proposals in the bill have significant implications for how they can create social change. Protest is an important way for anyone to speak truth to power. From protests against legislation, which discriminated against minorities, to young people raising their voices about climate breakdown, protest has been a mechanism through which civil society organisations have contributed to the creation of a safer, fairer society.

Protest is a central pillar of a healthy democracy. We were pleased to see Peers defending the right to protest and pass amendments that removed some of the worst provisions. This included removing provisions giving the police powers to restrict protests due to their noise level, and to further restrict assemblies and one person protests. These changes must be retained by MPs when the Bill returns to the Commons and we strongly urge you to support them.

Furthermore, we stand in solidarity with Gypsy and Traveller communities whose way of life will be criminalised by the Bill. The proposals contained in the Bill will have serious impacts on these communities, including the possibility of making families and children homeless without the provision of alternative accommodation. We hope that you will support Gypsy and Traveller communities and speak out against these elements of the PCSCB.

If you would like to have a meeting to discuss these issues in advance of ping pong, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Yours sincerely,

Debra Allcock Tyler, Chief Executive, Directory of Social Change

Vicky Browning, Chief Executive, ACEVO

Stephanie Draper, Chief Executive, Bond

Kathy Evans, Chief Executive, Children England

Sue Tibballs, Chief Executive, Sheila McKechnie Foundation

Sarah Vibert, interim Chief Executive, National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO)