

Rt Hon. Suella Braverman MP
Secretary of State for the Home Department
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF

03 July 2023

Dear Home Secretary,

We are writing to you as local authorities concerned about the modern slavery clauses within the Illegal Migration Bill and how this will impact our statutory duties. The Illegal Migration Bill states that the modern slavery support provisions will be disapplied to victims of human trafficking who have entered the UK via irregular means, and instead they can be subject to removal.

Under the Modern Slavery Act 2015, local authorities have a legal duty to notify the Secretary of State when we identify a potential victim of modern slavery. Under the provisions of the Illegal Migration Bill however, following these duties and making a referral to the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) could mean that we are providing the Home Office with information that would lead to the arrest, detention and removal of a person we suspect is a victim of modern slavery.

The Bill's provisions will be applied to anyone who entered the UK via irregular means on or after 7th March of this year. This means that we are currently making NRM referrals for victims of modern slavery who will be disqualified from support and subject to removal when the Bill passes.

A key role of a local authority is to keep our communities safe and safeguard vulnerable people. If less victims are able to access support under the National Referral Mechanism, or do not escape their traffickers due to fear of deportation, this impacts our roles, our resources and the safety of our communities. We kindly request that you consider the impact of how this Bill will affect victims of trafficking and modern slavery – who are victims of crime – and provide clarification on how the Bill will impact the statutory duties of local authorities under the Modern Slavery Act 2015.

Signed:

Birmingham City Council
Coventry City Council
London Borough of Barking and Dagenham
London Borough of Enfield
London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham (Cllr Rebecca Harvey, Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion and Community Safety)
London Borough of Sutton
London Borough of Tower Hamlets
Oxford City Council
Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames
Westminster City Council