

Jamie Hepburn
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

August 2022

Dear Mr. Jamie Hepburn

RE: PROPOSED SAFE ACCESS ZONES (SCOTLAND) BILL

I was quite shocked to read the draconian measures Gillian McKay MSP hopes to introduce in her proposed SAFE ACCESS ZONES Bill.

To suggest *“Seeking to influence or persuade a person...”* or *“Demonstrating using items such as leaflets, posters and pictures...”* should be punishable by up to six months in prison for a first offence and up to two years imprisonment for subsequent offences is outrageous!

If the Bill was to be passed, would this new law apply to any demonstration? Would anyone (an MSP perhaps) caught trying to “influence” or “persuade” a person to their way of thinking be liable to arrest and imprisonment? Or am I, and others like me, being discriminated against on religious and moral grounds?

If this is the case, which it would appear to be, what of my right to Freedom of Expression and Freedom of Assembly? Am I now only allowed to publicly express my opinion and share my beliefs and morals if it fits with the Scottish Government ideology?

Laws already exist to protect anyone being harassed or threatened and I support them -

- The Protection from Harassment Act 1997 protects people from harassment by the creation of non-harassment orders.
- The Criminal Justice and Licensing (Scotland) Act 2010 establishes an offence of threatening and abusive behaviour which is likely to cause fear and alarm.
- The Antisocial Behaviour etc (Scotland) Act 2004 allows police to issue a dispersal order where there is public alarm or distress.
- The Public Order Act 1986 gives police the power to impose conditions on public processions and public assemblies.

Therefore I believe this proposed Bill is a step too far and is damaging to democracy. I hope you will not support it.

Yours faithfully,