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Thank you for your e-mail of 22 November from you and your fellow CEOs regarding the Nationality and Borders Bill, specifically Part 5 which focuses on modern slavery.

I would firstly like to thank you and the anti-slavery sector for your support of the Government's commitment to tackle modern slavery. I share your desire to work together constructively on modern slavery issues and I know that officials wish to continue dialogue on these issues. Modern slavery remains a top priority for this Government, and I am committed to ensuring that the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) effectively helps all victims of modern slavery to recover from their exploitation and to support the prosecution of their exploiters.

The measures within the Nationality and Borders Bill, particularly those of Part 5 which focuses on modern slavery, will help us achieve key objectives of the NRM Transformation Programme, ensuring that victims are identified and supported as quickly as possible and reducing opportunities for the system to be misused so that the public can have confidence in the system.

We have recently seen a concerning increase in the number of foreign national offenders (FNOs) and those who pose a national security risk to our country seeking modern slavery referrals. In 2019, 16% of people detained within the UK following immigration offences were referred as potential victims of modern slavery. This is up from just 3% in 2017. This raises concerns that some referrals are being made late in the process to frustrate immigration action and that legitimate referrals are not being made in a timely way.

The Nationality and Borders Bill is designed to ensure that the system is both firm and fair and that we are addressing any gaps which allow misuse of the NRM system, impacting immigration removals and diverting resources from victims of trafficking.

As part of this, we are seeking to expand the existing One Stop Process through the Bill to require information to be provided within a specified period by a potential victim who has made a protection or human rights claim. This will help us identify victims as early as possible, a key objective of the NRM Transformation Programme.

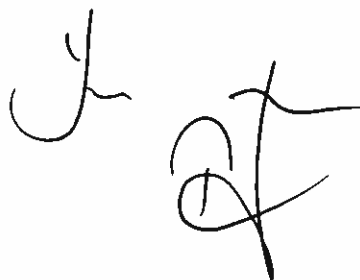
Through the £13.2m Trusted Relationships Fund, we are identifying innovative approaches to supporting children and young people at risk of exploitation, including child criminal exploitation. Local authority-led projects are being delivered in 11 areas across England to support children aged 10-17. Through an independent, programme-wide evaluation, we continue to build the evidence base on what works to protect children from exploitation.

Also, on 20 January 2021 the Government announced £148m of investment to tackle drugs misuse, supply and county lines activity. This includes £40m dedicated investment for 2021/22 to tackle drugs supply and county lines. This investment has allowed us to expand and build upon our successful County Lines Programme, established in November 2019.

Furthermore, we are committed to strengthening the criminal justice response to modern slavery, including by ensuring victims have the support they need to engage with the system so that offenders face justice. That is why we launched a grant, open to police forces in England and Wales and the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority, to fund initiatives to support victims of modern slavery within the criminal justice system.

This builds on existing work to support the police response to modern slavery and drive up prosecutions, including a total of £15m Home Office funding since October 2016, which has helped to drive the increase in modern slavery investigations. Our commitment to supporting victims to support prosecutions is precisely why the Nationality and Borders Bill will make clear that, where a public authority is pursuing an investigation or criminal proceedings, confirmed victims who are co-operating in this activity and need to remain in the UK in order to do so, will be granted temporary leave to remain to support this crucial endeavour.

My continued thanks to you all for the work you and your organisations do to help eradicate modern slavery. You are right that we need to work together – government, civil society, and business – to make the most impact. I look forward to continuing to work with you so we can achieve this shared goal.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'P. Patel', written in a cursive style.

**Rt Hon Priti Patel MP**