



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Dr Carolyn Wilkins
Chief Executive
Oldham Council
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Our Ref: KHM/PARK02002/02160130

28 January 2016

Dear Dr Wilkins

Thank you for your recent letters, received 6th January, regarding resolutions passed at Full Council on 16th December on refugees, the Trade Union Bill and on equality for mental health.

I appreciate you taking the time to make me aware of the Council's position on refugees. You may be aware that I have raised the issue of support for local authorities and the Government's policies more widely in the Commons with Ministers on 16th September, 12th October and 5th January.

With regard to the Trade Union Bill, I agree with the Council that this is an attack on trade unions and the employees that they represent. It is the latest in a long line of attempts by the Government to stifle reasonable democratic scrutiny, protest and challenge. The Bill does nothing to tackle the pressing national challenge our public services, businesses and industries alike are facing; that of addressing Britain's productivity gap and skills shortages.

Instead the Bill tries to drive a false wedge between government, industry, employees and the public by restricting rights – and at worst criminalising – ordinary working people, from midwives to factory workers to challenge low-pay or health and safety concerns.

All those who care about our democratic rights and an economy where business, employees and government work together for the mutual benefit should expose this Bill for what it is – a divisive piece of legislation which puts to bed any notion that the Government is taking a one nation approach. I am pleased to see the Council opposes it and I have consistently opposed it in Parliament.

I support the equality for mental health campaign. I believe that mental health is the biggest unaddressed health challenge of our age. One in six people across Britain are affected by a mental illness at any one time and the World Health Organisation estimates that by 2030 depression will overtake heart disease and cancer as the leading global burden of disease.

Debbie Abrahams MP is proud to represent the people of
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It's essential that we give mental health the priority it deserves if we are to thrive as a nation and ensure the NHS remains sustainable for the future. In the last Parliament, it was Labour that forced the Government to write parity of esteem between physical and mental health into law and our approach starts with a commitment to make this a reality on the ground.

Despite saying they would protect NHS spending, the last Government cut the budget for mental health services year on year. This decision has led to more young people being placed on adult wards, delays in accessing mental health care and many people sent hundreds of miles as a result of bed shortages.

Thank you once again for taking the time to keep me updated with the Council's views on these issues.

Yours sincerely



DEBBIE ABRAHAMS MP
Oldham East and Saddleworth

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