Dear [insert name of MP],

**The Domestic Abuse Bill and Protection for Migrant Women**

I am writing to you as your constituent residing in **[name of area]** regarding the Domestic Abuse Bill and the urgent need to enshrine protection for migrant women. Recent events surrounding the tragic death of Sarah Everard in March 2021 have reignited a much-needed national conversation about the immense dangers faced by many women and children in their homes and on our streets. The need for protection and support for all women subject to abuse and violence could not be greater.

Please [listen to](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=chU3xHdxHU8&feature=youtu.be) and [read](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1yzn2DsBcIBysB4W9zBn4d3IEAlY-YZUd/view) the powerful and moving accounts given by many migrant survivors, who describe in detail their distressing experiences of abuse and violence. Many women find themselves in precarious immigration positions through no fault of their own. Their abusers often deliberately jeopardise their immigration status, for example by supplying them with false information, withholding essential documentation and interfering with their application to regularise their stay. This results in many women becoming ‘overstayers’ and undocumented as a direct result of abuse. Detailed case studies highlighting these and other issues can be found in [Briefing Paper 2](https://southallblacksisters.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/DA-Bill-Briefing-Paper-2.pdf) by Southall Black Sisters (SBS).

It is now well recognised that abusers weaponise women’s insecure immigration status and economic dependency to exert absolute control, and to keep them in a state of fear. Women are regularly threatened by their abusers who tell them that any report of abuse to the authorities will lead to separation from their children, destitution and ultimately deportation.

The immigration laws including the No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) rule trap many women in abuse that often escalates, creating greater risks and vulnerability. They cannot access basic welfare benefits, and consequently cannot access refuges spaces or other safe accommodation as they have no means to pay for such accommodation or support themselves. As a consequence, abused migrant women and children are routinely turned away from services and safe accommodation. In 2019/20 for instance, just 4% of refuge spaces were accessible to women with NRPF.[[1]](#footnote-1)

**Vote for the amendment to protect migrant women**

I am seriously concerned that migrant women risk being excluded from the protective measures contained in the Domestic Abuse Bill. I believe such exclusion undermines its status as a ‘landmark Bill’ and for this reason, I urge you to vote in favour of the following amendment put forward by Southall Black Sisters (SBS) which was passed in the House of Lords with considerable cross party support on 15 March 2021.

**The amendment:**

1. ***Extend eligibility for the Domestic Violence Rule (DV Rule) and the Destitution Domestic Violence Concession (DDVC) to all migrant victims of domestic abuse.***
2. ***Extend the time period for the DDVC from three to at least six months.***

The success of the vote on the amendment in the House of Lords demonstrates a growing consensus on the need to do more to protect migrant women and children. It is supported by, amongst others, the designate Domestic Abuse Commissioner, the Victim’s Commissioner, all leading organisations in the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) sector, the Equality and Human Rights Commission and many charities in the children’s sector.

If passed in the House of Commons, this amendment will provide abused migrant women and children with a lifeline, by removing their financial dependency on abusers and giving them access to the safety and protection that all domestic abuse survivors deserve.

**The Government’s position is flawed**

The Government has so far rejected the amendment on the grounds that there is no clear evidence about the needs of migrant women and that the amendment will lead to the ‘exploitation’ of the immigration system. There is simply no factual basis for such assertions. SBS and others have provided considerable evidence on the needs of migrant women which has been completely ignored or misconstrued. The existence of the DV Rule and the DDVC also shows that the immigration system is not being exploited by migrant women otherwise it would have been reformed by now.

The Government has offered a £1.4 million pilot project (Support for Migrant Victims Scheme) to support migrant women for one year only. This is wholly inadequate since SBS estimates that it will provide minimal support to at best, 300-500 women, for three months each only. Countless other women will continue to be denied support and there are no guarantees that following the completion of the project, lasting measures and new laws will be introduced to protect migrant women. See [here](https://southallblacksisters.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/SBS-briefing-Pilot-Project-1.pdf) for reasons as to why the pilot scheme is not a viable alternative to the need to enshrine statutory protection for migrant women in the Bill.

As your constituent, I urge you to take the opportunity that will be presented when the Bill returns to the House of Commons to give proper consideration to the compelling reasons why the Bill must be amended to protect migrant women. As Baroness Helić said in support of the amendments on migrant women in the House of Lords:

*“Their financial impact will be negligible, their impact on immigration figures almost unnoticeable. Yet for the women whose lives will – quite literally – be saved by being able to trust the police, access help, and begin new lives free from abuse, the impact will be immeasurable.”*

I urge you to support the [amendments](https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/58-01/0281/200281.pdf) on the DV Rule and the DDVC (41) when the Bill returns to the House of Commons. I also urge you to support amendments on better protection for migrant women put forward by the Latin American Women’s Rights Service (number 40) and the End Violence Against Women Coalition (number 43).

For more information, please contact the [organisations supporting migrant women](https://southallblacksisters.org.uk/contact-us/).

I look forward to your response

Yours Sincerely,

**[Insert name and post code]**

1. Women’s Aid, 2020. The domestic abuse report 2020 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)