



RETURN TO GOVERN

As the Scottish Parliament returns after recess Frontline Feminists Scotland awaits what promises to be a significant year for women's rights in Scotland and beyond.

We believe that one of the first points of business for the Parliament will be the Gender Reform Bill, but we have concerns that whilst the rights of trans identified people are being considered, the impact of the changes included in the bill on women's rights are being ignored.

Frontline Feminists Scotland alongside our sister activist groups and single sex service providers from across the country have raised these concerns on numerous occasions to no avail. We have highlighted that women's right to dignity and privacy is a human right and any dilution in single sex services ignores the trauma women and girls experience and their need for safety to recover from male violence.

We have a First Minister who claims to be "Feminist to [her] fingertips" and yet women's consent and boundaries would be transcended every day by Scotland's services should the Gender Reform Bill in its current form, including self-ID, be approved by MSPs.

The Rt Hon Suella Braverman QC recently made a keynote speech outlining the intention and law behind the Equality Act 2010. She outlined the responsibilities for schools and stated that, "The right to freedom of belief, thought, conscience and speech must be protected. True diversity and equality are at risk when as a society we divide everyone into separate groups and then silence the views that may challenge those groups. This is not what democracy is about."

Frontline Feminists Scotland is a non-party political group. Our membership is made up of women who have many opinions on the constitutional question. However we are united in our alarm that the Scottish Government is continuing to push to devolve the Equality Act 2010. We question why there is a need for the Equality Act 2010 to be devolved at this point. In the face of an energy crisis, cost of living crisis and ongoing challenges of Covid, we do not believe this should be a priority and we question why it is.

We do not believe the current Government in Scotland has proven itself trustworthy to wield this power over the protections for the most vulnerable in our society. We recognise the limitations and challenges brought by Westminster overseeing the Act, however, until there is a commitment to women's human rights we will fight the devolvement of the Equality Act 2010.

The Scottish Government claims to be committed to human rights, but this does not seem to include the human rights of women. We would remind everyone that where any one protected characteristic group's rights are ignored and / or removed, no group is safe.

Frontline Feminists Scotland believes that this country has an opportunity to be progressive and we believe the vast majority of the population demand this. We cannot however be progressive when 51% of the population's needs are being misrepresented. We call on all elected representatives to engage fully with the debate on the Gender Reform Bill to ensure all voices are heard. Do not assume that those who are the loudest and most powerful have the needs of all at heart.