



14 June 2024

Dear David, Mike and Peredur,

Senedd Cymru (Electoral Candidate Lists) Bill

I would like to thank the Reform Bill and the Legislation, Justice and Constitution committees for their reports on the Senedd Cymru (Electoral Candidate Lists) Bill (“the Bill”), published last week. I would also like to thank the Finance Committee for its letter of 16 May on the financial implications of the legislation, to which I responded on 31 May.

The two committee reports make 47 recommendations in total. I am grateful to both committees for their detailed consideration of the Bill during Stage 1, including the valuable engagement that has taken place with academic and legal experts, key stakeholders and the general public. I would also like to place on record my gratitude for the contributions made to the committees as part of their Stage 1 scrutiny. I have followed, with keen interest, the rich debate during the first stage of the legislation’s passage and am pleased that the Reform Bill Committee has concluded that the Bill is “a step towards delivering fully diverse representation in the Senedd”. I note that, by majority, the committee recommends the Senedd supports the Bill’s general principles and recognises that the proposed quota model is broadly reflective of international best practice and is fit for purpose here in Wales.

Within this context of broad support for the purpose of the Bill, I also note that both committee reports make a number of important recommendations which require further consideration by the Welsh Government. The reports reflect on the range of views which have been expressed, during Stage 1, with regard to legislative competence and there are a number of recommendations to engage with the UK Government after the UK General Election. There are also recommendations in both reports that relate to the potential risk to the 2026 Senedd ordinary election associated with implementation of the legislation in time for that election. In addition, both committees call for more detail in the primary legislation about how the provisions would work in practice and identify other measures which may be considered to remove potential barriers to more women participating in politics in Wales.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

In particular, I note the committees' concerns about potential disruption to the outcome of the 2026 Senedd election should we look to implement the provisions in this Bill in time for that election, and in parallel with the wider Senedd reform measures. I am aware that some of the stakeholders who gave evidence during the Stage 1 scrutiny process voiced similar concerns. While I set out during Stage 1 scrutiny the steps we are taking to mitigate the risk of disruption to the 2026 Senedd election and implementation of the wider reforms, I take these concerns seriously. I will therefore give further consideration to whether, in the circumstances, the 2030 election may be a more prudent timetable for implementation.

On introduction of the Bill, and throughout Stage 1 scrutiny, I made it clear that the committees' views would form a central part of our consideration of the next steps on the Bill. Having read the reports, I consider it crucial that we give due consideration to the reports to respond as fully and appropriately as possible ahead of the Stage 1 debate.

To allow us to do this, I have taken the decision to delay the Stage 1 debate on the general principles of the Bill until 16 July 2024.

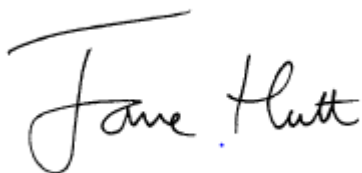
I am conscious that this means we will need to work with the Business Committee to agree a revised timetable for the legislation, and I will be looking to do this as soon as practicable to provide clarity on next steps for everyone.

I would again like to express my thanks to the committees for scrutinising the Bill and its supporting documentation. I look forward to continuing to work with the committees, and with Members as the Bill progresses through the Senedd process.

I remain committed to making the Senedd more effective by making it more representative of the gender make-up of Wales.

I am copying this letter to the Llywydd for information.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jane Hutt". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line above the first name.

Jane Hutt AS/MS

Y Trefnydd a'r Prif Chwip
Trefnydd and Chief Whip