

23rd March 2015

Dear Constituents,

Thank you for contacting me about overseas domestic workers.

I appreciate your concern on this issue. I can assure you that I am fully supportive of ensuring that overseas domestic workers are protected.

Abuse of domestic workers, whether UK or EEA nationals, those on an ODW or other visa, or those who have entered the UK illegally, is an abhorrent crime. The only way that we will be able to tackle this crime is to bring it out from the shadows and shine a light on the abuse and the abusers. To do this we have to be able to find the victims and support them in their recovery. We will not be able to if those being abused are discouraged from coming forward. The amendment in the Lords allows someone who is on an ODW visa to change employer without having to come forward to the authorities. Unfortunately, the Government believes that this means abusive employers will be protected from being exposed and the cycle of abuse will continue – a slave master will find a new victim to fulfil his or her needs and we will have no way of finding them.

The Government is determined that abuse for all is stopped, including those on an ODW visa. I am encouraged to see that it has tabled alternative amendments to the Modern Slavery Bill to ensure that there are additional protections for overseas domestic workers. This includes that anyone who has an ODW visa and is an identified and confirmed victim of slavery will be allowed to stay in the UK for six months and work as a domestic worker for other employers during this time, provided there are no public policy grounds for refusing them leave to remain. This will mean that victims can come forward to the authorities secure in the knowledge that they will be supported and without fear of just being deported.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Alok Sharma MP