



## Labour Women's Declaration Working Group

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To: All Female Labour MPs

*Sunday 30th August 2020*

### **Standing up for women's rights**

Dear sister,

We are writing on behalf of over 5,000 Labour Party members and supporters who have signed the Labour Women's Declaration. As you will be aware, the 2019 Labour Party Manifesto made a commitment to ensuring that "the single-sex exemptions for women under the Equality Act are properly understood and enforced". Millions of girls and women rely on our Party to do just that.

Rosie Duffield MP rightly objected to women being described as "people with cervixes", and despite widespread support, including a tweet from the Archbishop of Canterbury which was 'liked' by Shadow Equalities Minister Marsha de Cordova, she has come under heavy pressure to retract her words, as well as enduring misogynist abuse. In her statement of apology, she says that "we'd all benefit from a proper debate where voices and opinions are respected". We agree with her, and it is in this spirit that we are asking you to stand up for women's right to speak about these issues, even if you don't agree with us. We need MPs to speak up against the bullying and abuse of women in the Party, whether it's Rosie Duffield, MSP Jenny Marra or women members at local level.

We were glad to see Rosie Duffield speak up, as were thousands of other women. Women should not be referred to by their body parts in this manner, and to do so is dehumanising and sexist. Public health campaigns aimed at women should not be leveraged for political ends in the name of inclusion. Erasing the word 'women' from information about cervical cancer excludes women who may not realise this applies to them. This is not what inclusive language looks like, in our view.

The Labour Women's Declaration sets out women's legal rights in the UK and supports women's right to self-organisation. To read the Labour Women's Declaration and to learn more about our arguments and evidence, please visit our website:

<http://labourwomensdeclaration.org.uk/>. We have also attached a briefing document we have prepared in anticipation of the announcement on the outcome of the Gender Recognition Act consultation by Liz Truss, Minister for Women and Equalities.

We would be delighted if you wanted to join the many Labour members (including Members of the House of Lords, Members of the Scottish Parliament, Councillors, CLP and Branch Chairs and Women's Officers) who have signed the Declaration. We are aware that organisations such as Stonewall (who have campaigned for the removal of the single-sex exemptions) have had extensive contact with Labour MPs. We would like to offer you the opportunity to meet with us, in confidence if you prefer, to discuss any questions you may have about the evidence and arguments we are putting forward about the threat to women's rights from the proposals for sex 'self-ID' in law, policy and practice. In many cases, we could arrange for one or more Labour Party members from your Constituency, who support the Labour Women's Declaration, to join that meeting, if you wish.

Please stand up for all women, especially those working at the grassroots of the Labour Party. Thank you very much for your time and we look forward to hearing from you.

In solidarity,

The Labour Women's Declaration Working Group