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LIBERTY

PROTECTING CIVIL LIBERTIES
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Friday 13 July

Dear Secretary of State,

As the Trade Bill is debated on the floor of the House of Commons on Tuesday (17 July), we urge you to consider the unintended, yet serious, consequences it could have for the one in five people in the UK who have a disability.

As representatives of disabled people, businesses and campaigners for human rights and equality, we recognise the need for the UK to shape its own trade and investment agenda once we leave the European Union. However, we are concerned by provisions in the Trade Bill that put human rights and equality law protections at risk.

As it stands, the Bill lets ministers change a wide range of laws – including the Equality Act – without parliamentary scrutiny, in order to implement international trade agreements. **There are no safeguards to prevent ministers from using these new powers to remove rights granted by Parliament.**

These unprecedentedly broad powers could be used, for example, to change parts of the Equality Act which require public vehicles to be accessible for disabled people. Statistics from the Department of Transport show that disabled people rely far more on public transport than non-disabled people to access leisure facilities, local services and shops. Accessible public transport is of course also critical to disabled people's ability to work. Removing this requirement would undermine progress made in making public transport more accessible and leave disabled people cut-off.

Such broad powers have not been and cannot be justified to achieve the Bill's stated aim – of rolling over existing trade agreements the UK has through our membership of the EU.

We urge you to add a commitment to the text of the Bill to protect human rights and equality laws during the process of legislating for the UK's exit from the EU. There must be no roll-back on vital protections for disabled people or any other group that faces discrimination.

The UK is a world leader in human rights and equality protections and this must not change as we leave the EU. We are not willing to sacrifice disabled people's rights in the name of international trade.

Yours sincerely,

Liberty

Business Disability Forum

Action on Hearing Loss

Ambitious About Autism

Amnesty International UK

The Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations

British Stammering Association

Dimensions

Disability Law Service

Disability Rights UK

Equality and Diversity Forum

Just Fair

Leonard Cheshire

Mencap

NAT (National Aids Trust)

Women's Budget Group

René Cassin

Research Institute for Disabled Consumers

Royal National Institute of Blind People

United Response