

MS NUSRAT GHANI, M.P.
CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS
DEPUTY SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Sent by email.

21 April 2026

Dear Susannah

Thank you for your letter to Sir John Hayes MP on 13 April, regarding the oral evidence session on 25 March for the Public Bill Committee considering the Courts and Tribunals Bill. As Chairman of Ways and Means I oversee the Panel of Chairs, from which Members are drawn to chair sittings of Public Bill Committees. The chairs of the Committee have referred your letter to me in this capacity.

I have spoken to Members and officials involved with the Committee hearing and preparations for it. I have also reviewed the sessions in question.

I, and all Members involved, understand and appreciate that witnesses give their own time to inform Public Bill Committee work. We are grateful for all witnesses who come forward to inform the Committee's work, even when doing so may not be a comfortable experience.

I was sorry to hear about the effect that attending the Committee on this occasion had on the victim-survivors who gave evidence. Viewing the footage, it is clear that the Committee chair and Members adopted an appropriate tone for questioning those witnesses and recognised their courage, both in comments on the record and to in speaking to them afterwards.

I appreciate that your concerns centre on the impact on victim-survivors of observing questioning of the preceding panel. Anyone who has seen oral evidence in Committee before will know that questioning can be robust and challenging. The guidance you have quoted relates to Select

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Committees, which undertake a different function on behalf of the House from that of Public Bill Committees. Nevertheless, it is important that witnesses at any proceeding are supported to make representations and have the best experience possible. The House takes the roles of Chairs, Committees Members and witnesses seriously and for this reason officials regularly review the guidance, support and safeguarding that is provided to witnesses who attend Public Bill Committees.

As Chairman of Ways and Means I must, look to preserve Members' freedom to question robustly during parliamentary proceedings, particularly when holding public officials to account. Considering written and oral evidence is an important part of the Public Bill Committee process, and Members must be able to test thoroughly the evidence provided to them.

I am most grateful to everyone who has given their time to contributing to the Bill's proceedings, and know how challenging it can be.

I am copying this letter to the Committee Chairs to share with the Committee Members.

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large loop and a trailing flourish.

Ms Nusrat Ghani, M.P.
Chairman of Ways and Means
Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons