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Dear Minister,

I am writing on behalf of the Incorporated Society of Musicians (ISM), following the Government's recent response to the consultation on sexual harassment in the workplace<sup>1</sup>.

The consultation aimed to gather evidence on whether the current laws for protecting people from sexual harassment in the workplace are effective, including how best to strengthen and clarify the laws in relation to third-party harassment.

Nearly two years after its launch in July 2019, the Government has now published its response. While it considers everything from sexual harassment in the workplace to the length of time to bring claims to tribunal, the response provides very little protection for freelance workers, including many of the musicians the ISM represent. Protections instead remain primarily focused on employees.

Although we welcome the commitment to introduce a preventative duty on employers to prevent sexual harassment, the Government confirmed that this will only be introduced "as soon as parliamentary time allows". It is also not yet clear how or when the planned protections will be introduced, or indeed what they will be. We therefore ask that Government detail the additional protections and fix a timeframe for their introduction.

By its own admission, the Government acknowledges that groups such as musicians often fall outside of the scope of the Equality Act 2010 protections. The consultation response confirmed that broader issues around which groups are covered by the Equality Act will be an aspect of any wider future review of the legislation. I urge you to bring this review forward as a matter of urgency.

Finally, we note that the Government states that they will look "closely" at extending the time limit for bringing cases under the Equality Act. This is a step which has been recommended for several years (including by the

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/consultation-on-sexual-harassment-in-the-workplace/outcome/consultation-on-sexual-harcassment-in-the-workplace-government-response>

Women and Equalities Select Committee in 2018<sup>2</sup>), so it is extremely disappointing that, once again, no firm timeline is attached to this. This is another matter which now requires immediate action.

Alongside this, we ask that more is done to protect those who report sexual harassment from victimisation and harm to their career thereafter. We know that in our own sector, 77 percent of those who had suffered sexual harassment did not report their experience and their reason for this was the very real and valid fear that they would lose work.

As the Minister for Women and Equalities, I urge you to implement robust protections for freelance musicians. If the Government is serious about protecting all workers, it must put protections for freelancers at the heart of its strategy.

As musicians begin to re-enter the workplace following the COVID-19 pandemic, we will continue to make the case that Government must widen the legal protections for freelance musicians working in vulnerable settings at the earliest possible opportunity.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Best wishes,



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<sup>2</sup> <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmwomeq/725/725.pdf>