Rt. Hon John Swinney MSP
First Minister
The Scottish Government
St. Andrew's House
EH1 3DG

27 August 2026

Dear First Minister,

Re: Programme for Government: Human Rights Bill

We are writing as a wide range of organisations campaigning for human rights in Scotland, with many of us working alongside and with people experiencing poverty and inequality.

Your government has rightly set ambitious goals to tackle the poverty and inequality that impacts so many of Scotland's communities. Yet the reality is that too many people are still barely getting by. Families are struggling to afford food, energy and transport. People are unable to secure safe and affordable homes. Disabled people and others face barriers to accessing essential services. And too many children continue to grow up in the grip of poverty.

Ahead of next week's Programme for Government, we urge you to make good on your manifesto promise, and to make a clear commitment to introduce the Human Rights Bill; a Bill that should be understood not simply as a commitment to human rights, but as a fundamental anti-poverty measure.

Nobody should have to fight for the support they need. Everyone should be recognised as rights-holders, with public authorities accountable for respecting, protecting and fulfilling their rights.

A Human Rights Bill can help create that shift. It can strengthen people's ability to challenge decisions that undermine their rights, require public authorities to consider human rights in policy and service delivery, and provide a stronger framework for tackling the inequalities that drive and perpetuate poverty.

The Bill is also critical to your government's stated mission of ending child poverty. Tackling child poverty requires sustained action on income, housing, social security, health and public services, as well as action to tackle inequalities related to gender, race and disability. A Human Rights Bill can strengthen the framework for that action and help ensure progress is lasting.

If we are serious about ending poverty, we need to change the systems that produce and perpetuate it, not simply manage its consequences. And the Human Rights Bill can help to do just that.

The Scottish Government has already invested significant time and resources in developing the legislation. The Programme for Government now provides an opportunity to deliver on the promise of this Bill, and we urge you to take it. If you do, you will be taking a step toward a more equal, just and thriving Scotland with human rights at its centre.

Yours sincerely,

Ability Borders

AdvoCard

Amina – The Muslim Women's Resource Centre

Amnesty International UK

ARGH Scotland

Ayr Housing Aid Centre

Campaign for Freedom of Information in Scotland

Carers Scotland

Clan Childlaw

Community Transport Association

CSREC

Dandelion Solidarity

Deafblind Scotland

Disability Equality Scotland

Dumfries and Galloway Advocacy Service

Environmental Rights Centre for Scotland

Equality Network

Equate Scotland

Feniks

GCVS

Glasgow Disability Alliance

Govan Community Project

Headway East Lothian

Hongkongers in Lothians

Human Rights Consortium Scotland

In Control Scotland

Inclusion Scotland

Justice

Legal Services Agency

Making Rights Real

One Parent Families Scotland

Outside The Box

Poverty Alliance

SAMH (Scottish Action for Mental Health)

SCVO

Scottish Borders Social Enterprise Chamber

Scottish Child Law Centre

Scottish Community Development Network

Scottish Contemporary Art Network

Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance

Scottish Recovery Consortium

Scottish Women’s Convention

Scottish Youth Parliament

See Me

Shelter Scotland

Springburn Unity Network

THRE

Together Scotland

VOX Scotland

Welfare Scotland

Who Cares? Scotland

Young Women’s Movement

Zero Tolerance