

PE1845/KK Finlay Carson MSP submission of 20 February 2023

Dear Convener,

I write to re-iterate my support for PE1845: Agency to advocate for the healthcare needs of rural Scotland which I understand your committee is to consider at its meeting of 21st February 2023.

The evidence and submissions considered by the Petitions Committee showed the significant challenges which remote and rural patients are facing and the benefits that a commissioner for rural and remote healthcare could provide to those patients.

In my constituency of Galloway & West Dumfries, we face significant challenges to the provision of healthcare in our rural area. The continued closure of Stranraer's midwife-led maternity service demonstrates the significant adverse impact that long travel times and distance from services can have with prospective mothers continuing to face a daunting 180 mile round-trip to give birth at Dumfries & Galloway Royal Infirmary. We also continue to face other significant staffing and service delivery challenges in rural healthcare in Galloway and West Dumfries - for example, the shortage of permanent GPs in a number of rural GP practices, the closure and failure to return services to Cottage Hospitals and the closure of all NHS dental services to new patients in Dumfries & Galloway.

More than ever, rural and remote Scotland needs a unique voice in Government to articulate and advocate on its behalf in regards to healthcare which the proposals in this petition have the potential to provide.

I note the submission from the petitioner (PE1845/JJ) Gordon Baird which asks for the Committee to schedule time for further evidence to be taken on this matter to clarify comments previously made to your committee and to provide the opportunity for your members to directly speak with those with experience and expertise on rural healthcare. I support this request and while I appreciate the volume of work which the Committee will be undertaking, ask that time is made to hear further evidence on this matter.

Yours sincerely

Finlay Carson MSP
Member of the Scottish Parliament for Galloway & West Dumfries