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Rt Hon Dr Liam Fox MP  
House of Commons  
London, SW1A 0AA

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Dear Liam,

Thank you for your email of 15 October, forwarding the concerns of your constituents, regarding the proposals to require ID for voting.

An organisation has provided a campaign email template which claims that “all the evidence” points to “disenfranchisement”. This is simply untrue.

Electoral fraud is an unacceptable crime that strikes at a core principle of our democracy: that everyone’s vote matters. In our current system, there is undeniable potential for electoral fraud and the perception of this undermines public confidence in our democracy. The impact of electoral fraud on voters can be significant and takes away their right to vote as they want, whether through intimidation, bribery or by impersonating someone and casting their vote. There is undeniable potential for people to cast other people’s votes unless their identity is checked at the polling station. Voter ID is part of a body of work this Government remains committed to delivering to deter and prevent opportunities for electoral fraud.

This Government included a commitment to the national roll out of voter ID across Great Britain in its 2017 manifesto. In the Queen’s Speech, on 14 October, the Government stated its intention to bring forward a package of measures that will improve the integrity and security of each elector’s vote, whether they vote at a polling station or elsewhere. These measures, which include voter ID, are part of a wider initiative to improve trust in the integrity of the electoral process, maintain public confidence and support equality and inclusivity in our electoral system.

This Government’s proposed measures divide into two categories: anti-fraud measures such as voter ID and changes to postal and proxy voting; and accessibility measures. The voter ID measure would require voters to show an approved form of photographic ID before casting their vote in a polling station across Great Britain, at General Elections, and at local elections in England. Under this Government’s proposals, the list of approved ID would not be limited to passports and driving licences: a range of documents would be accepted. Any voter who does not have an approved form of ID would be able to apply, free of charge, for a local

electoral ID from their local authority to ensure that everyone eligible to vote has the opportunity to. This requirement would not be introduced before 2022.

The postal and proxy voting measures would improve the integrity of voting that takes place remotely, by reducing opportunities for individuals to collect large numbers of postal votes, or to act as a proxy for many electors over whom they may have undue influence. The proposed accessibility measures include increasing the range of support available to voters with disabilities in polling stations, and allowing a wider range of people (such as carers) to assist disabled voters in polling stations if needed. These changes would remove potential barriers faced by disabled voters.

Voter ID has been piloted by local authorities at elections in 2018 and 2019 and its impact evaluated by both the Cabinet Office and the independent Electoral Commission. Both evaluations of the voter ID pilots show that the pilots were a success and the overwhelming majority of electors who turned up to vote did so with the right documents and had confidence in knowing how to cast their vote.

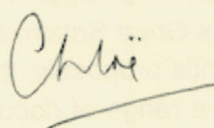
Voter ID, which is supported by the independent Electoral Commission, is a reasonable and proportionate measure to prevent voter fraud and ensure that your vote is yours, and yours alone. International elections monitors, such as the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), jointly called for the introduction of ID in polling stations in their reports on the UK General Election in 2010 and 2015. They see the lack of verification as too trusting and open to abuse.

This Government takes its Public Sector Equality Duty extremely seriously. Throughout the development of our work on electoral integrity we consulted with a broad range of representative groups, charities and civil society organisations to ensure that voter ID could work for everybody.

This Government remains committed to rolling out this effective anti-fraud measure and bringing the whole of the United Kingdom into line with Northern Ireland, where ID has been required to vote in elections since 1985, and photo ID since 2003, without adverse effect on participation or turnout. Strengthening the integrity of our electoral system would give the public confidence that our elections are secure and fit for the 21st century. If people are confident about the electoral system, they are more likely to participate in it.

I hope that this helps you answer your constituents' queries.

**Yours ever,**

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Chloe". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal stroke.

**Chloe Smith MP**