

Open sector letter RE Zero Hours Contracts amendments

We call on MPs to reject misguided amendments made to government legislation that could leave many workers in danger of continued workplace insecurity.

The Employment Rights Bill implements measures to give workers on zero hours contracts and other variable hours arrangements the stability of a guaranteed hours contract.

But the House of Lords amended the Bill to mean that workers will have to **request** guaranteed hours – instead of it being the **responsibility of the employer** to offer it.

We believe no worker should have to beg their boss for a secure contract.

If left in the Bill, this could leave thousands of workers – particularly women, racially minoritised, disabled and younger workers - in danger of continuing exploitation and financial insecurity.

The amendment claims to reduce the administrative burden on employers. However it is not fair to shift this burden onto the lowest-paid, most insecure and marginalised workers.

Many workers will be unaware of their rights. On top of this, the experience of legislation in other areas of employment law is that the balance of power means many workers will not exercise a right to request a new right.

We hear regularly of workers who are pressurised by managers not to push for their legal entitlements, or who feel they cannot ask for fear of repercussions.

This would particularly be the case for a worker on a low or zero hours contract who might fear that, if they put in a request and didn't meet the conditions for a guaranteed hours contract, they would be denied future shifts.

For many workers this barrier is just too high and will mean the right to regular hours remains real only on paper – not in practice.

Some workers will still want a zero hours contract. But the Bill in its original form has never denied them this. The way the Bill was originally drafted means they will be able to reject an employer's offer of guaranteed hours and remain on a zero hours contract if they wish.

The Employment Rights Bill represents a historic – and popular - opportunity to rebalance power in the workplace and raise the basic standard of living for workers. MPs must reject attempts to dilute its potential.

Signed by if you are happy to sign then please add your organisation name followed by your CEO/signer name below

Young Women's Trust, Claire Reindorp, CEO

Trade Union Congress, Paul Nowak, General Secretary

Work Foundation, Ben Harrison, Director

Women's Budget Group, Mary-Ann Stephenson, Director

Fawcett Society, Penny East, CEO

Working Families, Jane van Zyl, CEO

Working Chance, Natasha Finlayson, CEO

Pregnant Then Screwed, Rachel Grocott, CEO

Maternity Action, Ali Fiddy, Director

Equality Trust, Priya Sahni-Nicholas and Jo Wittams, Co-Executive Directors