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Dear Patience,

22 July 2019

During the debate on employment in the House of Lords on Thursday 6 June, you asked whether NICs Holidays for companies taking on ex-prisoners, which the government committed to in its 2017 manifesto commitment, are available.

First, it may help if I set out what the government is doing across the board to improve employment outcomes for ex-offenders which I know is important to you.

Those with convictions face several barriers to employment, the nature of which are broad. The Government's Employment and Education Strategy addresses these barriers by enhancing offenders' skills, capability and work-readiness. To support employers to take on ex-offenders the government has:

- Consulted governors and employers on proposals to increase the opportunities available to prisoners to gain experience in real workplaces while in custody through Release on Temporary License.
- Empowered prison governors to commission education provision that leads to employment opportunities for ex-offenders
- Worked with business and the third sector to further address the barriers that prevent people with a criminal conviction from having a fair chance to demonstrate that they are willing and able to make a positive contribution to society.
- In addition, the government already encourages employers to take on ex-prisoners via the New Futures Network.

With regards to an employer NICs holiday, please be assured we remain committed to delivering on this manifesto commitment, however it is important that the government takes the time necessary to analyse all the impacts of this policy, its links to wider Government priorities and existing policy initiatives, and how to ensure effective implementation. Failing to do so could lead to increased admin for business, and a policy that is poorly implemented.

It is right that the government consider any change to National Insurance in the context of the whole tax system and impacts on the wider public finances. This is done through the regular Spending Review and Budget processes and ensures that policy decisions can be taken in a manner that supports coherence, predictability, stability and simplicity in the UK tax system.

We'll set out any changes as part of the annual fiscal event process, in the context of broader government work on employment support, and the wider public finances.

I will also place a copy of this letter in the House library.

With all good wishes  
Debbie

**BARONESS STEDMAN-SCOTT OBE DL**