Written submission from Brian Rigby (WHC0046)

As a retired secondary school history teacher of 39 years (as of September 2015) I know first-hand the contribution of girls (our future generation of women) make to daily life and their ambition to succeed in their careers, which many of them do. However, for a variety of reasons, many of these do not look to a life in politics. In my view this is due to historical stereotype as the girls I taught saw predominantly men as politicians or as the greater contributors to major changes in society. Books they use and other sources of information they access tend to feature male achievements and marginalise the contribution of women. With such stereotyping it is no wonder that we have so few women as MPs. You, as a committee, now have the chance to address this so I am pleading with you to do so.

Although the current Prime Minister is a woman, the fact remains that of our 650 MPs, 458 (70%) are men and only 192 are women. There are still more men in the Commons than there have ever been women MPs. Women make a massive contribution to society with their paid and unpaid work so they merit fair inclusion. It is time to right this historic wrong.

“We know that when women are in parliament…it builds more resilient, responsive, better informed institutions” states Professor Ngaire Woods. I believe diversity leads to better decisions. Parliament should draw upon the widest possible pool of talent and experience, including the 32 million UK women, so that sooner rather than later there will be a fifty-fifty split in the make-up of MPs to more accurately reflect the make-up of men and women in society. After all, MPs make the decisions that affect all of our society so with more women as MPs, their decisions will better represent our society.

Representation shapes policy. More women MPs would ensure more informed policy-making on ALL issues and particularly those concerning equal pay, reproductive rights, violence against women and girls, domestic violence, pensions, sexism, discrimination, inclusion, maternity care, family life, and parenting.

It is possible that we could have even fewer women MPs with the proposed boundary changes coming in by 2020 so it is clearly the right time to make progress in increasing the representation of women as MPs to more than offset this possibility.

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