



The Baroness Stowell of Beeston
House of Lords

13th January 2026

Dear Baroness Stowell,

Crime and Policing Bill: assaults on retail workers

During the Committee stage debate on Lord Hendy's amendment 356F to the Crime and Policing Bill, we discussed the distinction between the provisions in clauses 37 and 38 providing for a bespoke offence of assaulting a retail worker and Lord Hendy's proposal for a bespoke offence of assaulting transport workers (Hansard, 7 January 2026, columns 1195 to 1208). This letter is to clarify my remarks at column 1205 on the rationale behind clauses 37 and 38.

This Government and the retail sector have long championed the new offence as provided for in the Bill. It is unacceptable that shop theft and violence and abuse towards retail workers continues to rise. We ask retailers to perform a significant act of public service as they enforce restrictions on the sale of items including cigarettes, alcohol and knives.

In response to retail industry data reporting an increase in the frequency and severity of violence and abuse experienced by retail workers, the Government has brought forward clauses 37 and 38 which create a new offence of assaulting a retail worker. Bringing forward this legislation not only sends a strong message that this criminality is not acceptable, but it will also ensure data on assaults against retail workers is collected and can be used to influence police activity and response.

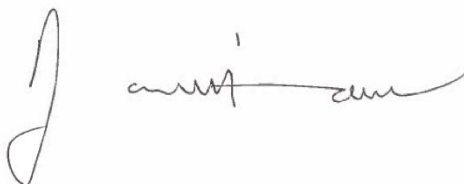
Those workers whose roles are not included within the definition of retail worker, or indeed who work in other sectors, are already covered under other legislation such as the Offences against the Person Act 1861, which also covers more serious violence, such as actual bodily harm and grievous bodily harm.

The previous government introduced a statutory aggravating factor for assault against any public facing worker via section 156 of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022. The aggravating factor applies in cases of assault where an offence is committed against those providing a public service, performing a public duty or providing a service to the public. This includes retail workers, but also a much wider range of public-facing workers. This aggravating factor ensures the courts treat the public-facing nature of a victim's role as an aggravating factor when considering the sentence for an offence and sends a clear message that violence and abuse towards any worker will not be tolerated.

I trust this clarifies the position. I remain grateful for the support across the House for these measures.

I am copying this letter to Baroness Morgan of Cotes, Lord Hendy, Baroness McIntosh of Pickering, the Bishop of Manchester, Lord Goddard of Stockport, Lord Blencathra, Lord Davies of Gower and Baroness Doocey. I am also placing a copy in the library of the House.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'J' followed by a series of cursive loops and a long horizontal stroke.

Lord Hanson of Flint