Dear Yvette Cooper

We hope this letter finds you well. We are writing to you as a coalition of organisations and groups working in the area of women’s housing rights.

We wish to draw your attention to the provisions in Part 3 of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill (“PCSC Bill”) that stand to significantly curtail local and national housing campaigns. Whether this be the pernicious “noise trigger” in Clause 56 and 57 that strikes at the heart of how we make our voices heard, the new, last-minute addition of ‘protest banning orders’ (SDPOs) that will place bans on named individuals’ right to protest or the slew of new criminal offences, we are deeply concerned that this Bill will extinguish our right to demand fair and safe housing for women across the country.

There is a long history of women’s groups mobilising against evictions, unsafe housing, high rents and insufficient accommodation for survivors of domestic abuse and women leaving prison. From local ACORN groups [protesting outside letting agencies](https://www.theargus.co.uk/news/16208057.protest-help-mum-faces-eviction-brighton/) to prevent evictions of women and their children to Sisters Uncut [occupying council homes slated for demolition](https://www.theargus.co.uk/news/16208057.protest-help-mum-faces-eviction-brighton/), to Focus E15 campaign’s [weekly speak-outs to support families languishing in overcrowded temporary accommodation](https://focuse15.org/2022/01/09/newham-council-threatens-pregnant-mother-with-homelessness/). Protest continues to be a vital way to resist the ongoing housing crisis.

Examples from a wide range of housing organisations, collectives and informal networks shows how important a range of strategies, including protests, are to protecting people in precarious housing from [unfair evictions](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_3cqRAcHGd8&t=1s). This includes challenging rogue landlords, despite successful court action due to failed enforcement. These strategies have been particularly valuable in the context of Covid-19 and [secure crucial outcomes for vulnerable tenants](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/nov/24/renter-activists-block-london-eviction-as-end-of-covid-protections-takes-toll).

Protest is a lifeline to those families who have [suffered lockdown in overcrowded accommodation](https://focuse15.org/2021/04/06/watch-as-newham-mother-is-forced-to-study-on-cooker-top/).  Children in particular benefit from this expression of disapproval for the difficulties they suffer in these housing conditions - [from sleep problems to simply not having the space to do homework](https://focuse15.org/2020/12/31/our-lives-and-our-future-resistance-has-not-gone-away/).  In bringing their hidden struggles out in the open, they reject shame.

Finally, solidarity between residents who face the [demolition of their estate](https://focuse15.org/2021/12/18/newham-residents-anger-over-ballot-process-mounts/) is felt most strongly when they come together collectively to raise their voices.

**We join a** [**large coalition of civil society organisations**](https://www.libertyhumanrights.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Joint-briefing-on-Part-3-of-the-PCSC-Bill-Report-Stage-HoL-Jan-2022.pdf) **spanning violence against women and girls, human rights, criminal justice, democracy sectors and more in urging you to use your platform as Shadow Home Secretary to encourage Peers to vote in favour of amendments proposing that Clauses 56-62 ‘not stand part’ of the Bill. In the event of these amendments falling at Report Stage, we call on Peers to take the opportunity presented by the Bill’s report stage in the House of Lords on 17th January 2022 to mitigate the worst harms of the Bill and:**

* Vote against Government amendment 159 to prevent the introduction of Serious Disruption Prevention Orders “SDPOs” or ‘Protest Banning Orders’
* Support amendments 115, 123, 124 and 125 to remove the ability of police to impose noise-based conditions on protest
* Support amendments on replacing the “ought to know” knowledge requirement
* Vote against Government amendment 152 to prevent the introduction of a new offence of interference with key national infrastructure
* Vote against Government amendments 154-158 to prevent the introduction of protest-specific Stop and Search

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you would like to discuss any of the issues in the above letter further.

Best regards,

On behalf of:

Dr Lisa Wintersteiger, Chief Executive, Law for Life

Focus E15