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Our Ref: MW/jh

Letter sent by email to

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Dear Humza,

Resisting the Minimum Service Levels Bill

The Fire Brigades Union welcomes your pledge to the STUC congress that the Scottish Government "will never issue or enforce a single work notice" under the Minimum Service Levels Bill.

This law is an authoritarian attempt to effectively outlaw strikes in many sectors, including the Fire and Rescue Service. It is extremely welcome that the government has suffered a number of defeats on amendments in the House of Lords, although we will need to consider how they will now respond.

Defeating the Tories' anti-workers agenda is not just about Westminster and the courts. A strategy of non-cooperation and non-compliance could make it inoperable. The Scottish government, working alongside trade unions, local government and some employers, could raise the possibility of defeating this undemocratic legislation.

As you are aware, health and education, as well as the emergency services, are fully devolved to the Scottish Parliament, and areas like rail are dependent on public sector contracts. The UK Government will use the Minimum Service Levels Bill to target workers in these sectors.

As First Minister, you can play an important role in making this law unworkable by ensuring that no work notices are issued in the public sector, or in any area dependent on public sector contracts.

It would be an unprecedented attack on devolution for UK ministers to impose work notices in any disputes in these policy areas in Scotland, which have been held by the Scottish Parliament since its inception in 1999.

As General Secretary of the FBU, I would be delighted to meet you to discuss how our union and others can work with the Scottish Government to resist any such attacks.

A Scottish Government-led summit, involving the STUC and representatives of its affiliated unions could be an important first step in launching a united campaign of resistance against the legislation.

The launch of such a forum would also allow unions and your Government to formulate a specific framework for how anti-union laws can be resisted in Scotland.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Wrack".

Matt Wrack
General Secretary