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Dear colleagues

The publication of the social security Bill is not only another significant step in Scotland's social security journey, it's also a historic moment for our country. We now have the opportunity to decide on what works for Scotland and what we have published is an approach that works for the people who need it.

I want to thank you all for the role you have played in helping us to get to this point. I have always been clear that the best way to create this new public service and a system that works is to build it from the ground up, using the lived experience of people currently in the UK benefit system, those working to support them and those with other relevant experience. With your help, ideas and challenge over the past year we are, together, making real progress towards our shared goals of a rights based social security system for Scotland that has the principles of dignity, fairness and respect at its heart and in its everyday work.

These rights are there clearly in this Bill and are embedded in our approach throughout – whether it is how entitlement to benefits is determined or in a more just review and appeals system.

We're taking a planned approach to setting up that new system because it's a large scale and very complex task and I am very conscious of our primary objective to deliver a safe and secure transfer of the benefits we will be responsible for. Whatever else we can achieve, we must make sure that as the powers transfer, everyone continues to receive the support they are entitled to, at the level they are due and on the day they expect it. We will not lose sight of the fact that investing in our people is investing in the future of our country.

Now, with the publication of the Bill, we take our next important step and I look forward to working with you, with colleagues across the Chamber, the Expert Advisory Group, our stakeholder interests and our Experience Panels to make the best decisions we can. We have made a good start. But there are challenges ahead if we are to deliver a system of which we can all be proud. Thank you again for your work in getting us to this historic point.

Jeane Freeman
Minister for Social Security

