

PE1623/W

Petitioner submission of 24 March 2017

We thank the Scottish government for their letter of March 3rd, in which it states that it will be considering the Equalities impact of any proposals emerging from the current review of educational policy, and furthermore undertakes to review the Equalities concerns emerging from our petition, to the extent that they are not dealt with by those proposals.

However, one consequence is that until that point is reached, it is not possible to say whether the matters raised have been properly dealt with. For this reason, we particularly welcome the statement by the Convener at the committee meeting of 2 February that " We do not propose to close the petition until we have asked the Scottish Government specifically whether it has fulfilled its responsibilities with respect to the public sector equality duty"; to which we would add that the Scottish Government should not be sole judge in its own cause as to whether it has in fact done so. For that reason, we would respectfully ask the Committee to keep the petition open until such time as the Scottish Government has explained its as yet unstated position, and we and other interested parties have had the opportunity to comment.

The Convener also asked "whether there is a middle ground somewhere". We would respectfully suggest that some such middle ground might consist in replacement of the present arrangement by one in which the elected Councillors could *if they so wished* invite representatives of faith groups and of other bodies representing diverse world views. We would ourselves, in such case, continue to argue that such representatives should be non-voting, as are the invited representatives of parents and teachers, both as a matter of deep principle and to protect the process from party political considerations.