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13 September 2021

Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP  
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Paddy Lillis  
General Secretary

Dear Prime Minister

### **Protection of Retail Workers**

Ahead of the second reading of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill in the House of Lords on Tuesday, I am writing to urge the Government to deliver on their commitment to include an amendment protecting retail workers from abuse, threats and violence.

Last year, over 100,000 people signed a Parliamentary petition calling on the Government to introduce a specific offence of abusing, threatening or assaulting a retail worker. Similar legislation to protect retail workers has now come into effect in Scotland and, as part of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill, the Government is enhancing similar provisions for emergency service workers.

Retail workers have been key workers throughout the pandemic, providing an essential service to their communities. Despite the heroic contributions of these workers, a small minority of customers have been responsible for an horrific increase in violence and abuse towards shop staff. Preliminary results from Usdaw's latest survey of nearly 2,000 retail staff across the UK show that in the last twelve months:

- 92% have experienced verbal abuse,
- 70% were threatened by a customer,
- 14% were assaulted.

Whilst the pandemic has made the situation worse, violence and abuse towards shop staff was already a significant issue. Between 2017 and 2019, the proportion of retail workers experiencing abuse rose from less than half to over two-thirds. It is therefore clear that long term legislative provisions are required to protect retail workers who have been working on the frontline.

In response to a question from Matt Vickers MP during the Report Stage in the House of Commons, Robert Buckland Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice, stated, "I look forward to working with him and other colleagues on bringing forward measures that will deal with the need to protect our valiant retail workers, who have given us so much in this pandemic and who serve our country with distinction."

In light of the horrific situation facing retail workers, it is clearly now time for the Government to bring forward legislative measures. These measures should be in line with the recommendations from the recent Home Affairs Select Committee inquiry into violence and abuse towards retail workers. For reference, the Committee stated, "We believe there is a

strong case for extra protection in law for retail workers through a specific offence. The Government should consult urgently on the scope of the offence, recognising the particular pressure on those in different occupations who are asked to enforce the law.”

Usdaw believes that this must be addressed through a relevant amendment to the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill.

I look forward to hearing from you shortly.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading 'Paddy Lillis'.

**PADDY LILLIS**  
General Secretary

cc Robert Buckland, Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice  
Baroness Williams of Trafford