

PE1814/G

Petitioner (PE1813), Petitioner (PE1814) and Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights (CRER) joint submission of 8 December 2020

We note that the Committee will meet on Wednesday 9th December to consider petitions PE1813 and PE1814 with potential to close these 'on the basis that the Scottish Government has committed to find ways of promoting diversity and better teaching and learning about Black and ethnic minority history and the importance of tackling racism in society today in schools'.

We urge the Committee not to close these petitions prematurely, as the issues raised remain yet to be addressed. The petitions should remain open at least until after the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, John Swinney has met with key stakeholders to discuss further action, and the Committee has received information from John Swinney about what these specific actions will be.

The outlined submission from the Scottish Government discusses diversity and teaching, including addressing the under representation of minority ethnic teachers in Scotland and the creation of learning resources. However, we remain concerned that much of this remains in the realm of discussion and not specific actions which will address the issues raised in the petitions. Within the measures there is no detailed discussion of the teaching of Black/BME histories within schools, which is a key aspect of the petitions. Additionally, neither petitioners have been approached to meet with John Swinney to discuss their views and further actions as part of stakeholder engagement.

This year, the Black Lives Matter protests highlighted the continual need for action on equality and anti-racism. In June, the motion 'showing solidarity with anti-racism' had cross-party support within the Scottish Parliament. There is widespread support for change, highlighted by petitions with thousands of signatures. It would be disappointing in the context of this if one of the key issues for young people growing up in Scotland today can't be progressed with concrete actions.